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ESTHER LYON

PHOTOGRAPHURE FROM A DRAWING BY

FRANK T. MERRILL

The Complete Works of
George Eliot

Felix Holt
Poetical Works



THE KELMSCOTT SOCIETY
PUBLISHERS : : NEW YORK

FELIX HOLT, THE RADICAL

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THE RADICAL.

INTRODUCTION.

FIVE AND THIRTY years ago the glory had not yet departed from the old coach-roads: the great roadside inns were still brilliant with well-polished tankards, the smiling glances of pretty barmaids, and the repartees of jocose ostlers; the mail still announced itself by the merry notes of the horn; the hedge-cutter or the rick-thatcher might still know the exact hour by the unfailing yet otherwise meteoric apparition of the pea-green Tally-ho or the yellow Independent; and elderly gentlemen in pony-chaises, quartering nervously to make way for the rolling swinging swiftness, had not ceased to remark that times were finely changed since they used to see the pack-horses and hear the tinkling of their bells on this very highway.

In those days there were pocket boroughs, a Birmingham unrepresented in Parliament and compelled to make strong representations out of it, unrepealed corn-laws, three-and-six-penny letters, a brawny and many-breeding pauperism, and other departed evils; but there were some pleasant things too, which have also departed. *Non omnia grandior ætas quæ fugiamus habet*, says the wise goddess: you have not the best of it in all things, O youngsters! the elderly man has his enviable memories, and not the least of them is the memory of a long journey in mid-spring or autumn on the outside of a stage-coach. Posterity may be shot, like a bullet through a tube, by atmospheric pressure from Winchester to New-castle: that is a fine result to have among our hopes; but the slow old-fashioned way of getting from one end of our country to the other is the better thing to have in the memory. The tube-journey can never lend much to picture and narrative:

it is as barren as an exclamatory O! Whereas the happy outside passenger seated on the box from the dawn to the gloaming gathered enough stories of English life, enough of English labors in town and country, enough aspects of earth and sky, to make episodes for a modern Odyssey. Suppose only that his journey took him through that central plain, watered at one extremity by the Avon, at the other by the Trent. As the morning silvered the meadows with their long lines of bushy willows marking the watercourses, or burnished the golden corn-ricks clustered near the long roofs of some midland homestead, he saw the full-uddered cows driven from their pasture to the early milking. Perhaps it was the shepherd, head-servant of the farm, who drove them, his sheep-dog following with a heedless unofficial air as of a beadle in undress. The shepherd with a slow and slouching walk, timed by the walk of grazing beasts, moved aside, as if unwillingly, throwing out a monosyllabic hint to his cattle; his glance, accustomed to rest on things very near the earth, seemed to lift itself with difficulty to the coachman. Mail or stage coach for him belonged to that mysterious distant system of things called "Government," which, whatever it might be, was no business of his, any more than the most outlying nebula or the coal-sacks of the southern hemisphere: his solar system was the parish; the master's temper and the casualties of lambing-time were his region of storms. He cut his bread and bacon with his pocket-knife, and felt no bitterness except in the matter of pauper laborers and the bad-luck that sent contrarious seasons and the sheep-rot. He and his cows were soon left behind, and the homestead too, with its pond overhung by elder-trees, its untidy kitchen-garden and cone-shaped yew-tree arbor. But everywhere the bushy hedgerows wasted the land with their straggling beauty, shrouded the grassy borders of the pastures with catkined hazels, and tossed their long blackberry branches on the corn-fields. Perhaps they were white with May, or starred with pale pink dogroses; perhaps the urchins were already nutting amongst them, or gathering the plenteous crabs. It was worth the journey only to see those hedgerows, the liberal homes of unmarketable beauty — of the purple-blossomed ruby-berried nightshade, of the wild convolvulus climbing and spreading in tendrilled strength till it made a great curtain of pale-green hearts and white trumpets, of the many-tubed honeysuckle which, in its most delicate fragrance, hid a charm more subtle and penetrating than beauty. Even if it were

winter the hedgerows showed their coral, the scarlet haws, the deep-crimson hips, with lingering brown leaves to make a resting-place for the jewels of the hoar-frost. Such hedgerows were often as tall as the laborers' cottages dotted along the lanes, or clustered into a small hamlet, their little dingy windows telling, like thick-filmed eyes, of nothing but the darkness within. The passenger on the coach-box, bowled along above such a hamlet, saw chiefly the roofs of it: probably turned its back on the road, and seemed to lie away from everything but its own patch of earth and sky, away from the parish church by long fields and green lanes, away from all intercourse except that of tramps. If its face could be seen, it was most likely dirty; but the dirt was Protestant dirt, and the big, bold, gin-breathing tramps were Protestant tramps. There was no sign of superstition near, no crucifix or image to indicate a misguided reverence: the inhabitants were probably so free from superstition that they were in much less awe of the parson than of the overseer. Yet they were saved from the excesses of Protestantism by not knowing how to read, and by the absence of handlooms and mines to be the pioneers of Dissent: they were kept safely in the *via media* of indifference, and could have registered themselves in the census by a big black mark as members of the Church of England.

But there were trim cheerful villages too, with a neat or handsome parsonage and gray church set in the midst; there was the pleasant tinkle of the blacksmith's anvil, the patient cart-horses waiting at his door; the basket-maker peeling his willow wands in the sunshine; the wheelwright putting the last touch to a blue cart with red wheels; here and there a cottage with bright transparent windows showing pots full of blooming balsams or geraniums, and little gardens in front all double daisies or dark wallflowers; at the well, clean and comely women carrying yoked buckets, and towards the free school small Britons dawdling on, and handling their marbles in the pockets of unpatched corduroys adorned with brass buttons. The land around was rich and marly, great corn-stacks stood in the rick-yards — for the rick-burners had not found their way hither; the homesteads were those of rich farmers who paid no rent, or had the rare advantage of a lease, and could afford to keep their corn till prices had risen. The coach would be sure to overtake some of them on their way to their outlying fields or to the market-town, sitting heavily on their well-groomed horses, or weighing down one side of

an olive-green gig. They probably thought of the coach with some contempt, as an accommodation for people who had not their own gigs, or who, wanting to travel to London and such distant places, belonged to the trading and less solid part of the nation. The passenger on the box could see that this was the district of protuberant optimists, sure that old England was the best of all possible countries, and that if there were any facts which had not fallen under their own observation, they were facts not worth observing: the district of clean little market-towns without manufactures, of fat livings, an aristocratic clergy, and low poor-rates. But as the day wore on the scene would change: the land would begin to be blackened with coal-pits, the rattle of handlooms to be heard in hamlets and villages. Here were powerful men walking queerly with knees bent outward from squatting in the mine, going home to throw themselves down in their blackened flannel and sleep through the daylight, then rise and spend much of their high wages at the ale-house with their fellows of the Benefit Club; here the pale eager faces of handloom-weavers, men and women, haggard from sitting up late at night to finish the week's work, hardly begun till the Wednesday. Everywhere the cottages and the small children were dirty, for the languid mothers gave their strength to the loom; pious Dissenting women, perhaps, who took life patiently, and thought that salvation depended chiefly on predestination, and not at all on cleanliness. The gables of Dissenting chapels now made a visible sign of religion, and of a meeting-place to counterbalance the ale-house, even in the hamlets; but if a couple of old termagants were seen tearing each other's caps, it was a safe conclusion that, if they had not received the sacraments of the Church, they had not at least given in to schismatic rites, and were free from the errors of Voluntaryism. The breath of the manufacturing town, which made a cloudy day and a red gloom by night on the horizon, diffused itself over all the surrounding country, filling the air with eager unrest. Here was a population not convinced that old England was as good as possible; here were multitudinous men and women aware that their religion was not exactly the religion of their rulers, who might therefore be better than they were, and who, if better, might alter many things which now made the world perhaps more painful than it need be, and certainly more sinful. Yet there were the gray steeples too, and the churchyards, with their grassy mounds and venerable headstones, sleeping in the sunlight;

there were broad fields and homesteads, and fine old woods covering a rising ground, or stretching far by the roadside, allowing only peeps at the park and mansion which they shut in from the working-day world. In these midland districts the traveller passed rapidly from one phase of English life to another: after looking down on a village dingy with coal-dust, noisy with the shaking of looms, he might skirt a parish all of fields, high hedges, and deep-rutted lanes; after the coach had rattled over the pavement of a manufacturing town, the scene of riots and trades-union meetings, it would take him in another ten minutes into a rural region, where the neighborhood of the town was only felt in the advantages of a near market for corn, cheese, and hay, and where men with a considerable banking account were accustomed to say that "they never meddled with politics themselves." The busy scenes of the shuttle and the wheel, of the roaring furnace, of the shaft and the pulley, seemed to make but crowded nests in the midst of the largo-sped, slow-moving life of homesteads and far-away cottages and oak-sheltered parks. Looking at the dwellings scattered amongst the woody flats and the ploughed uplands, under the low gray sky which overhung them with an unchanging stillness as if Time itself were pausing, it was easy for the traveller to conceive that town and country had no pulse in common, except where the handlooms made a far-reaching straggling fringe about the great centres of manufacture; that till the agitation about the Catholics in '29, rural Englishmen had hardly known more of Catholics than of the fossil mammals; and that their notion of Reform was a confused combination of sick-lunatics, trades-unions, Nottingham riots, and in general whatever required the calling-out of the yeomanry. It was still easier to see that, for the most part, they resisted the notion of crops and stood by their fallows: and the coachman would perhaps tell how in one parish an innovating farmer, who talked of Sir Humphry Davy, had been fairly driven out by popular dislike, as if he had been a *condemned Radical*; and how, the parson having one Sunday preached from the words, "Break up your fallow-ground," the people thought he had made the text out of his own head, otherwise it would never have come "so pat" on a matter of business; but when they found it in the Bible at home, some said it was an argument for fallows (else why should the Bible mention fallows?), but a few of the weaker sort were shaken, and thought it was an argument that fallows should be done away with, else the

Bible would have said, "Let your fallows lie;" and the next morning the parson had a stroke of apoplexy, which, as coincident with a dispute about fallows, so set the parish against the innovating farmer and the rotation of crops, that he could stand his ground no longer, and transferred his lease.

The coachman was an excellent travelling companion and commentator on the landscape: he could tell the names of sites and persons, and explain the meaning of groups, as well as the shade of Virgil in a more memorable journey; he had as many stories about parishes, and the men and women in them, as the Wanderer in the "Excursion," only his style was different. His view of life had originally been genial, and such as became a man who was well warmed within and without, and held a position of easy, undisputed authority; but the recent initiation of Railways had embittered him: he now, as in a perpetual vision, saw the ruined country strewn with shattered limbs, and regarded Mr. Huskisson's death as a proof of God's anger against Stephenson. "Why, every inn on the road would be shut up!" and at that word the coachman looked before him with the blank gaze of one who had driven his coach to the outermost edge of the universe, and saw his leaders plunging into the abyss. Still he would soon relapse from the high prophetic strain to the familiar one of narrative. He knew whose the land was wherever he drove; what noblemen had half-ruined themselves by gambling; who made handsome returns of rent; and who was at daggers-drawn with his eldest son. He perhaps remembered the fathers of actual baronets, and knew stories of their extravagant or stingy housekeeping; whom they had married, whom they had horsewhipped, whether they were particular about preserving their game, and whether they had had much to do with canal companies. About any actual landed proprietor he could also tell whether he was a Reformer or an Anti-Reformer. That was a distinction which had "turned up" in latter times, and along with it the paradox, very puzzling to the coachman's mind, that there were men of old family and large estate who voted for the Bill. He did not grapple with the paradox; he let it pass, with all the discreetness of an experienced theologian or learned scholiast, preferring to point his whip at some object which could raise no questions.

No such paradox troubled our coachman when, leaving the town of Treby Magna behind him, he drove between the hedges for a mile or so, crossed the queer long bridge over the river Lapp, and then put his horses to a swift gallop up

the hill by the low-nestled village of Little Treby, till they were on the fine level road, skirted on one side by grand larches, oaks, and wych elms, which sometimes opened so far as to let the traveller see that there was a park behind them.

How many times in the year, as the coach rolled past the neglected-looking lodges which interrupted the screen of trees, and showed the river winding through a finely-timbered park, had the coachman answered the same questions, or told the same things without being questioned! That? — oh, that was Transome Court, a place there had been a fine sight of lawsuits about. Generations back, the heir of the Transome name had somehow bargained away the estate, and it fell to the Durfeys, very distant connections, who only called themselves Transomes because they had got the estate. But the Durfeys' claim had been disputed over and over again; and the coachman, if he had been asked, would have said, though he might have to fall down dead the next minute, that property didn't always get into the right hands. However, the lawyers had found their luck in it; and people who inherited estates that were lawed about often lived in them as poorly as a mouse in a hollow cheese; and, by what he could make out, that had been the way with these present Durfeys, or Transomes, as they called themselves. As for Mr. Transome, he was as poor, half-witted a fellow as you'd wish to see; but *she* was master, had come of a high family, and had a spirit — you might see it in her eye and the way she sat her horse. Forty years ago, when she came into this country, they said she was a pictur'; but her family was poor, and so she took up with a hatchet-faced fellow like this Transome. And the eldest son had been just such another as his father, only worse — a wild sort of half-natural, who got into bad company. They said his mother hated him and wished him dead; for she'd got another son, quite of a different cut, who had gone to foreign parts when he was a youngster, and she wanted her favorite to be heir. But heir or no heir, Lawyer Jermyn had had *his* picking out of the estate. Not a door in his big house but what was the finest polished oak, all got off the Transome estate. If anybody liked to believe he paid for it, they were welcome. However, Lawyer Jermyn had sat on that box-seat many and many a time. He had made the wills of most people thereabout. The coachman would not say that Lawyer Jermyn was not the man he would choose to make his own will some day. It was not so well for a lawyer to be over-honest, else he might not be up to other people's tricks.

And as for the Transome business, there had been ins and outs in time gone by, so that you couldn't look into it straight backward. At this Mr. Sampson (everybody in North Loamshire knew Sampson's coach) would screw his features into a grimace expressive of entire neutrality, and appear to aim his whip at a particular spot on the horse's flank. If the passenger was curious for further knowledge concerning the Transome affairs, Sampson would shake his head and say there had been fine stories in his time; but he never condescended to state what the stories were. Some attributed this reticence to a wise incredulity, others to a want of memory, others to a simple ignorance. But at least Sampson was right in saying that there had been fine stories — meaning, ironically, stories not altogether creditable to the parties concerned.

And such stories often come to be fine in a sense that is not ironical. For there is seldom any wrong-doing which does not carry along with it some downfall of blindly-climbing hopes, some hard entail of suffering, some quickly-satiated desire that survives, with the life in death of old paralytic vice, to see itself cursed by its woful progeny — some tragic mark of kinship in the one brief life to the far-stretching life that went before, and to the life that is to come after, such as has raised the pity and terror of men ever since they began to discern between will and destiny. But these things are often unknown to the world; for there is much pain that is quite noiseless; and vibrations that make human agonies are often a mere whisper in the roar of hurrying existence. There are glances of hatred that stab and raise no cry of murder; robberies that leave man or woman forever beggared of peace and joy, yet kept secret by the sufferer — committed to no sound except that of low moans in the night, seen in no writing except that made on the face by the slow months of suppressed anguish and early morning tears. Many an inherited sorrow that has marred a life has been breathed into no human ear.

The poets have told us of a dolorous enchanted forest in the under world. The thorn-bushes there, and the thick-barked stems, have human histories hidden in them; the power of unuttered cries dwells in the passionless-seeming branches, and the red warm blood is darkly feeding the quivering nerves of a sleepless memory that watches through all dreams. These things are a parable.

CHAPTER I.

He left me when the down upon his lip
Lay like the shadow of a hovering kiss.
"Beautiful mother, do not grieve," he said;
"I will be great, and build our fortunes high,
And you shall wear the longest train at court,
And look so queenly, all the lords shall say,
'She is a royal changeling: there's some crown
Lacks the right head, since hers wears nought but braids.' "
O, he is coming now — but I am gray:
And he —

On the 1st of September, in the memorable year 1832, some one was expected at Transome Court. As early as two o'clock in the afternoon the aged lodge-keeper had opened the heavy gate, green as the tree trunks were green with nature's powdery paint, deposited year after year. Already in the village of Little Treby, which lay on the side of a steep hill not far off the lodge gates, the elder matrons sat in their best gowns at the few cottage doors bordering the road, that they might be ready to get up and make their courtesy when a travelling carriage should come in sight; and beyond the village several small boys were stationed on the lookout, intending to run a race to the barn-like old church, where the sexton waited in the belfry ready to set the one bell in joyful agitation just at the right moment.

The old lodge-keeper had opened the gate and left it in the charge of his lame wife, because he was wanted at the Court to sweep away the leaves, and perhaps to help in the stables. For though Transome Court was a large mansion, built in the fashion of Queen Anne's time, with a park and grounds as fine as any to be seen, in Loamshire, there were very few servants about it. Especially, it seemed, there must be a lack of gardeners; for, except on the terrace surrounded with a stone parapet in front of the house, where there was a parterre kept with some neatness, grass had spread itself over the gravel walks, and over all the low mounds once carefully cut as black beds for the shrubs and larger plants. Many of the windows had the shutters closed, and under the grand Scotch fir that stooped towards one corner, the brown fir-needles of many years lay in a small stone balcony in front of two such darkened windows. All round, both near and far, there were grand

trees, motionless in the still sunshine, and, like all large motionless things, seeming to add to the stillness. Here and there a leaf fluttered down; petals fell in a silent shower; a heavy moth floated by, and, when it settled, seemed to fall wearily; the tiny birds alighted on the walks, and hopped about in perfect tranquillity; even a stray rabbit sat nibbling a leaf that was to its liking, in the middle of a grassy space, with an air that seemed quite impudent in so timid a creature. No sound was to be heard louder than a sleepy hum, and the soft monotony of running water hurrying on to the river that divided the park. Standing on the south or east side of the house, you would never have guessed that an arrival was expected.

But on the west side, where the carriage entrance was, the gates under the stone archway were thrown open; and so was the double door of the entrance-hall, letting in the warm light on the scagliola pillars, the marble statues, and the broad stone staircase, with its matting worn into large holes. And, stronger sign of expectation than all, from one of the doors which surrounded the entrance-hall, there came forth from time to time a lady, who walked lightly over the polished stone floor, and stood on the door-steps and watched and listened. She walked lightly, for her figure was slim and finely formed, though she was between fifty and sixty. She was a tall, proud-looking woman, with abundant gray hair, dark eyes and eyebrows, and a somewhat eagle-like yet not unfeminine face. Her tight-fitting black dress was much worn; the fine lace of her cuffs and collar, and of the small veil which fell backwards over her high comb, was visibly mended; but rare jewels flashed on her hands, which lay on her folded black-clad arms like finely-cut onyx cameos.

Many times Mrs. Transome went to the door-steps, watching and listening in vain. Each time she returned to the same room: it was a moderate-sized comfortable room, with low ebony bookshelves round it, and it formed an anteroom to a large library, of which a glimpse could be seen through an open doorway, partly obstructed by a heavy tapestry curtain drawn on one side. There was a great deal of tarnished gilding and dinginess on the walls and furniture of this smaller room, but the pictures above the bookcases were all of a cheerful kind: portraits in pastel of pearly-skinned ladies with hair-powder, blue ribbons, and low bodices; a splendid portrait in oils of a Transome in the gorgeous dress of the Restoration; another of a Transome in his boyhood, with his hand on the neck of

a small pony; and a large Flemish battle-piece, where war seemed only a picturesque blue-and-red accident in a vast sunny expanse of plain and sky. Probably such cheerful pictures had been chosen because this was Mrs. Transome's usual sitting-room: it was certainly for this reason that, near the chair in which she seated herself each time she re-entered, there hung a picture of a youthful face which bore a strong resemblance to her own: a beardless but masculine face, with rich brown hair hanging low on the forehead, and undulating beside each cheek down to the loose white cravat. Near this same chair were her writing-table, with vellum-covered account-books on it, the cabinet in which she kept her neatly-arranged drugs, her basket for her embroidery, a folio volume of architectural engravings from which she took her embroidery patterns, a number of the *North Loamshire Herald*, and the cushion for her fat Blenheim, which was too old and sleepy to notice its mistress's restlessness. For, just now, Mrs. Transome could not abridge the sunny tedium of the day by the feeble interest of her usual in-door occupations. Her consciousness was absorbed by memories and prospects, and except when she walked to the entrance-door to look out, she sat motionless with folded arms, involuntarily from time to time turning towards the portrait close by her, and as often, when its young brown eyes met hers, turning away again with self-checking resolution.

At last, prompted by some sudden thought or by some sound, she rose and went hastily beyond the tapestry curtain into the library. She paused near the door without speaking: apparently she only wished to see that no harm was being done. A man nearer seventy than sixty was in the act of ranging on a large library-table a series of shallow drawers, some of them containing dried insects, others mineralogical specimens. His pale mild eyes, receding lower jaw, and slight frame, could never have expressed much vigor, either bodily or mental; but he had now the unevenness of gait and feebleness of gesture which tell of a past paralytic seizure. His threadbare clothes were thoroughly brushed; his soft white hair was carefully parted and arranged: he was not a neglected-looking old man; and at his side a fine black retriever, also old, sat on its haunches, and watched him as he went to and fro. But when Mrs. Transome appeared within the doorway, her husband paused in his work and shrank like a timid animal looked at in a cage where flight is impossible. He was conscious of a troublesome intention, for which he had been

rebuked before — that of disturbing all his specimens with a view to a new arrangement.

After an interval, in which his wife stood perfectly still, observing him, he began to put back the drawers in their places in the row of cabinets which extended under the bookshelves at one end of the library. When they were all put back and closed, Mrs. Transome turned away, and the frightened old man seated himself with Nimrod the retriever on an ottoman. Peeping at him again, a few minutes after, she saw that he had his arm round Nimrod's neck, and was uttering his thoughts to the dog in a loud whisper, as little children do to any object near them when they believe themselves unwatched.

At last the sound of the church-bell reached Mrs. Transome's ear, and she knew that before long the sound of wheels must be within hearing; but she did not at once start up and walk to the entrance-door. She sat still, quivering and listening; her lips became pale, her hands were cold and trembling. Was her son really coming? She was far beyond fifty; and since her early gladness in this best-loved boy, the harvests of her life had been scanty. Could it be that now — when her hair was gray, when sight had become one of the day's fatigues, when her young accomplishments seemed almost ludicrous, like the tone of her first harpsichord and the words of the songs long browned with age — she was going to reap an assured joy? — to feel that the doubtful deeds of her life were justified by the result, since a kind Providence had sanctioned them? — to be no longer tacitly pitied by her neighbors for her lack of money, her imbecile husband, her graceless eldest-born, and the loneliness of her life; but to have at her side a rich, clever, possibly a tender, son? Yes; but there were the fifteen years of separation, and all that had happened in that long time to throw her into the background in her son's memory and affection. And yet — did not men sometimes become more filial in their feeling when experience had mellowed them, and they had themselves become fathers? Still, if Mrs. Transome had expected only her son, she would have trembled less; she expected a little grandson also: and there were reasons why she had not been enraptured when her son had written to her only when he was on the eve of returning that he already had an heir born to him.

But the facts must be accepted as they stood, and, after all, the chief thing was to have her son back again. Such pride, such affection, such hopes as she cherished in this fifty-sixth

year of her life, must find their gratification in him — or nowhere. Once more she glanced at the portrait. The young brown eyes seemed to dwell on her pleasantly; but, turning from it with a sort of impatience, and saying aloud, "Of course he will be altered!" she rose almost with difficulty, and walked more slowly than before across the hall to the entrance-door.

Already the sound of wheels was loud upon the gravel. The momentary surprise of seeing that it was only a post-chaise, without a servant or much luggage, that was passing under the stone archway and then wheeling round against the flight of stone steps, was at once merged in the sense that there was a dark face under a red travelling-cap looking at her from the window. She saw nothing else; she was not even conscious that the small group of her own servants had mustered, or that old Hickee the butler had come forward to open the chaise-door. She heard herself called "Mother!" and felt a light kiss on each cheek; but stronger than all that sensation was the consciousness which no previous thought could prepare her for, that this son who had come back to her was a stranger. Three minutes before, she had fancied that, in spite of all changes wrought by fifteen years of separation, she should clasp her son again as she had done at their parting; but in the moment when their eyes met, the sense of strangeness came upon her like a terror. It was not hard to understand that she was agitated, and the son led her across the hall to the sitting-room, closing the door behind them. Then he turned towards her and said, smiling, —

"You would not have known me, eh, mother?"

It was perhaps the truth. If she had seen him in a crowd, she might have looked at him without recognition — not, however, without startled wonder; for though the likeness to herself was no longer striking, the years had overlaid it with another likeness which would have arrested her. Before she answered him, his eyes, with a keen restlessness, as unlike as possible to the lingering gaze of the portrait, had travelled quickly over the room, alighting on her again as she said, —

"Everything is changed, Harold. I am an old woman, you see."

"But straighter and more upright than some of the young ones!" said Harold; inwardly, however, feeling that age had made his mother's face very anxious and eager. "The old women at Smyrna are like sacks. You've not got clumsy and shapeless. How is it I have the trick of getting fat?" (Here

Harold lifted his arm and spread out his plump hand.) "I remember my father was as thin as a herring. How is my father? Where is he?"

Mrs. Transome just pointed to the curtained doorway, and let her son pass through it alone. She was not given to tears; but now, under the pressure of emotion that could find no other vent, they burst forth. She took care that they should be silent tears, and before Harold came out of the library again they were dried. Mrs. Transome had not the feminine tendency to seek influence through pathos; she had been used to rule in virtue of acknowledged superiority. The consciousness that she had to make her son's acquaintance, and that her knowledge of the youth of nineteen might help her little in interpreting the man of thirty-four had fallen like lead on her soul; but in this new acquaintance of theirs she cared especially that her son, who had seen a strange world, should feel that he was come home to a mother who was to be consulted on all things, and who could supply his lack of the local experience necessary to an English landholder. Her part in life had been that of the clever sinner, and she was equipped with the views, the reasons, and the habits which belonged to that character: life would have little meaning for her if she were to be gently thrust aside as a harmless elderly woman. And besides, there were secrets which her son must never know. So, by the time Harold came from the library again, the traces of tears were not discernible, except to a very careful observer. And he did not observe his mother carefully; his eyes only glanced at her on their way to the *North Loamshire Herald* lying on the table near her, which he took up with his left hand, as he said, —

"Gad! what a wreck poor father is! Paralysis, eh? Terribly shrunk and shaken — crawls about among his books and beetles as usual, though. Well, it's a slow and easy death. But he's not much over sixty-five, is he?"

"Sixty-seven, counting by birthdays; but your father was born old, I think," said Mrs. Transome, a little flushed with the determination not to show any unasked-for feeling.

Her son did not notice her. All the time he had been speaking his eyes had been running down the columns of the newspaper.

"But your little boy, Harold — where is he? How is it he has not come with you?"

"Oh, I left him behind, in town," said Harold, still looking at the paper. "My man Dominic will bring him, with the rest

of the luggage. Ah, I see it is young Debarry, and not my old friend, Sir Maximus, who is offering himself as candidate for North Loamshire."

"Yes. You did not answer me when I wrote to you to London about your standing. There is no other Tory candidate spoken of, and you would have all the Debarry interest."

"I hardly think that," said Harold, significantly.

"Why?" Jermyn says a Tory candidate can never be got in without it."

"But I shall not be a Tory candidate."

Mrs. Transome felt something like an electric shock.

"What then?" she said, almost sharply. "You will not call yourself a Whig?"

"God forbid! I'm a Radical."

Mrs. Transome's limbs tottered; she sank into a chair. Here was a distinct confirmation of the vague but strong feeling that her son was a stranger to her. Here was a revelation to which it seemed almost as impossible to adjust her hopes and notions of a dignified life as if her son had said that he had been converted to Mahometanism at Smyrna, and had four wives, instead of one son, shortly to arrive under the care of Dominic. For the moment she had a sickening feeling that it was all of no use that the long-delayed good fortune had come at last—all of no use though the unloved Durfey was dead and buried, and though Harold had come home with plenty of money. There were rich Radicals, she was aware, as there were rich Jews and Dissenters, but she had never thought of them as country people. Sir Francis Burdett had been generally regarded as a madman. It was better to ask no questions, but silently to prepare herself for anything else there might be to come.

"Will you go to your rooms, Harold, and see if there is anything you would like to have altered?"

"Yes, let us go," said Harold, throwing down the newspaper, in which he had been rapidly reading almost every advertisement while his mother had been going through her sharp inward struggle. "Uncle Lingon is on the bench still, I see," he went on, as he followed her across the hall; "is he at home—will he be here this evening?"

"He says you must go to the Rectory when you want to see him. You must remember you have come back to a family who have old-fashioned notions. Your uncle thought I ought to have you to myself in the first hour or two. He remembered that I had not seen my son for fifteen years."

"Ah, by Jove! fifteen years — so it is!" said Harold, taking his mother's hand and drawing it under his arm; for he had perceived that her words were charged with an intention. "And you are as straight as an arrow still; you will carry the shawls I have brought you as well as ever."

They walked up the broad stone steps together in silence. Under the shock of discovering her son's Radicalism, Mrs. Transome had no impulse to say one thing rather than another; as in a man who had just been branded on the forehead all wonted motives would be uprooted. Harold, on his side, had no wish opposed to filial kindness, but his busy thoughts were imperiously determined by habits which had no reference to any woman's feeling; and even if he could have conceived what his mother's feeling was, his mind, after that momentary arrest, would have darted forward on its usual course.

"I have given you the south rooms, Harold," said Mrs. Transome, as they passed along a corridor lit from above, and lined with old family pictures. "I thought they would suit you best, as they all open into each other, and this middle one will make a pleasant sitting-room for you."

"Gad! the furniture is in a bad state," said Harold, glancing round at the middle room which they had just entered; "*the moths seem to have got into the carpets and hangings.*"

"I had no choice except moths or tenants who would pay rent," said Mrs. Transome. "We have been too poor to keep servants for uninhabited rooms."

"What! you've been rather pinched, eh?"

"You find us living as we have been living these twelve years."

"Ah, you've had Durfey's debts as well as the lawsuits — confound them! It will make a hole in sixty thousand pounds to pay off the mortgages. However, he's gone now, poor fellow; and I suppose I should have spent more in buying an English estate some time or other. I always meant to be an Englishman, and thrash a lord or two who thrashed me at Eton."

"I hardly thought you could have meant that, Harold, when I found you had married a foreign wife."

"Would you have had me wait for a consumptive lackadaisical Englishwoman, who would have hung all her relations round my neck? I hate English wives; they want to give their opinion about everything. They interfere with a man's life. I shall not marry again."

Mrs. Transome bit her lip, and turned away to draw up a blind. She would not reply to words which showed how com-

pletely any conception of herself and her feelings was excluded from her son's inward world.

As she turned round again she said, "I suppose you have been used to great luxury; these rooms look miserable to you, but you can soon make any alteration you like."

"Oh, I must have a private sitting-room fitted up for myself down-stairs. And the rest are bedrooms, I suppose," he went on, opening a side-door. "Ah, I can sleep here a night or two. But there's a bedroom down-stairs, with an ante-room, I remember, that would do for my man Dominic and the little boy. I should like to have that."

"Your father has slept there for years. He will be like a distracted insect, and never know where to go, if you alter the track he has to walk in."

"That's a pity. I hate going up-stairs."

"There is the steward's room: it is not used, and might be turned into a bedroom. I can't offer you my room, for I sleep up-stairs." (Mrs. Transome's tongue could be a whip upon occasion, but the lash had not fallen on a sensitive spot.)

"No; I'm determined not to sleep up-stairs. We'll see about the steward's room to-morrow, and I dare say I shall find a closet of some sort for Dominic. It's a nuisance he had to stay behind, for I shall have nobody to cook for me. Ah, there's the old river I used to fish in. I often thought, when I was at Smyrna, that I would buy a park with a river through it as much like the Lapp as possible. Gad, what fine oaks those are opposite! Some of them must come down, though."

"I've held every tree sacred on the demesne, as I told you, Harold. I trusted to your getting the estate some time, and releasing it; and I determined to keep it worth releasing. A park without fine timber is no better than a beauty without teeth and hair."

"Bravo, mother!" said Harold, putting his hand on her shoulder. "Ah, you've had to worry yourself about things that don't properly belong to a woman—my father being weakly. We'll set all that right. You shall have nothing to do now but to be grandmamma on satin cushions."

"You must excuse me from the satin cushions. That is part of the old woman's duty I am not prepared for. I am used to be chief bailiff, and to sit in the saddle two or three hours every day. There are two farms on our hands besides the Home Farm."

"Phew-ew! Jermyn manages the estate badly, then. That

will not last under *my* reign," said Harold, turning on his heel and feeling in his pockets for the keys of his portmanteaus, which had been brought up.

"Perhaps when you've been in England a little longer," said Mrs. Transome, coloring as if she had been a girl, "you will understand better the difficulty there is in letting farms in these times."

"I understand the difficulty perfectly, mother. To let farms, a man must have the sense to see what will make them inviting to farmers; and to get sense supplied on demand is just the most difficult transaction I know of. I suppose if I ring there's some fellow who can act as valet and learn to attend to my hookah?"

"There is Hickes the butler, and there is Jabez the footman; those are all the men in the house. They were here when you left."

"Oh, I remember Jabez — he was a dolt. I'll have old Hickes. He was a neat little machine of a butler; his words used to come like the clicks of an engine. He must be an old machine now, though."

"You seem to remember some things about home wonderfully well, Harold."

"Never forget places and people — how they look and what can be done with them. All the country round here lies like a map in my brain. A deuced pretty country too; but the people were a stupid set of old Whigs and Tories. I suppose they are much as they were."

"I am, at least, Harold. You are the first of your family that ever talked of being a Radical. I did not think I was taking care of our old oaks for that. I always thought Radicals' houses stood staring above poor sticks of young trees and iron hurdles."

"Yes, but the Radical sticks are growing, mother, and half the Tory oaks are rotting," said Harold, with gay carelessness. "You've arranged for Jermyn to be early to-morrow?"

"He will be here to breakfast at nine. But I leave you to Hickes now; we dine in an hour."

Mrs. Transome went away and shut herself in her own dressing-room. It had come to pass now — this meeting with the son who had been the object of so much longing; whom she had longed for before he was born, for whom she had sinned, from whom she had wrenched herself with pain at their parting, and whose coming again had been the one great hope of her years. The moment was gone by; there had been no

ecstasy, no gladness even; hardly half an hour had passed, and few words had been spoken, yet with that quickness in weaving new futures which belongs to women whose actions have kept them in habitual fear of consequences, Mrs. Transome thought she saw with all the clearness of demonstration that her son's return had not been a good for her in the sense of making her any happier.

She stood before a tall mirror, going close to it and looking at her face with hard scrutiny, as if it were unrelated to herself. No elderly face can be handsome, looked at in that way; every little detail is startlingly prominent, and the effect of the whole is lost. She saw the dried-up complexion, and the deep lines of bitter discontent about the mouth.

"I am a hag!" she said to herself (she was accustomed to give her thoughts a very sharp outline), "an ugly old woman who happens to be his mother. That is what he sees in me, as I see a stranger in him. I shall count for nothing. I was foolish to expect anything else."

She turned away from the mirror and walked up and down her room.

"What a likeness!" she said, in a loud whisper; "yet, perhaps, no one will see it besides me."

She threw herself into a chair, and sat with a fixed look, seeing nothing that was actually present, but inwardly seeing with painful vividness what had been present with her a little more than thirty years ago—the little round-limbed creature that had been leaning against her knees, and stamping tiny feet, and looking up at her with gurgling laughter. She had thought that the possession of this child would give unity to her life, and make some gladness through the changing years that would grow as fruit out of these early maternal caresses. But nothing had come just as she had wished. The mother's early raptures had lasted but a short time, and even while they lasted there had grown up in the midst of them a hungry desire, like a black poisonous plant feeding in the sunlight,—the desire that her first, rickety, ugly, imbecile child should die, and leave room for her darling, of whom she could be proud. Such desires make life a hideous lottery, where every day may turn up a blank; where men and women who have the softest beds and the most delicate eating, who have a very large share of that sky and earth which some are born to have no more of than the fraction to be got in a crowded entry, yet grow haggard, fevered, and restless, like those who watch in other lotteries. Day after day, year

after year, had yielded blanks; new cares had come, bringing other desires for results quite beyond her grasp, which must also be watched for in the lottery; and all the while the round-limbed pet had been growing into a strong youth, who liked many things better than his mother's caresses, and who had a much keener consciousness of his independent existence than of his relation to her: the lizard's egg, that white rounded passive prettiness, had become a brown, darting, determined lizard. The mother's love is at first an absorbing delight, blunting all other sensibilities; it is an expansion of the animal existence: it enlarges the imagined range for self to move in: but in after years it can only continue to be joy on the same terms as other long-lived love—that is, by much suppression of self, and power of living in the experience of another. Mrs. Transome had darkly felt the pressure of that unchangeable fact. Yet she had clung to the belief that somehow the possession of this son was the best thing she lived for; to believe otherwise would have made her memory too ghastly a companion. Some time or other, by some means, the estate she was struggling to save from the grasp of the law would be Harold's. Somehow the hated Durfey, the imbecile eldest, who seemed to have become tenacious of a despicable squandering life, would be got rid of; vice might kill him. Meanwhile the estate was burdened: there was no good prospect for any heir. Harold must go and make a career for himself: and this was what he was bent on, with a precocious clearness of perception as to the conditions on which he could hope for any advantages in life. Like most energetic natures, he had a strong faith in his luck; he had been gay at their parting, and had promised to make his fortune; and in spite of past disappointments, Harold's possible fortune still made some ground for his mother to plant her hopes in. His luck had not failed him; yet nothing had turned out according to her expectations. Her life had been like a spoiled shabby pleasure-day, in which the music and the processions are all missed, and nothing is left at evening but the weariness of striving after what has been failed of. Harold had gone with the Embassy to Constantinople, under the patronage of a high relative, his mother's cousin; he was to be a diplomatist, and work his way upward in public life. But his luck had taken another shape: he had saved the life of an Armenian banker, who in gratitude had offered him a prospect which his practical mind had preferred to the problematic promises of diplomacy and high-born

cousinship. Harold had become a merchant and banker at Smyrna; had let the years pass without caring to find the possibility of visiting his early home, and had shown no eagerness to make his life at all familiar to his mother, asking for letters about England, but writing scantily about himself. Mrs. Transome had kept up the habit of writing to her son, but gradually the unfruitful years had dulled her hopes and yearnings; increasing anxieties about money had worried her, and she was more sure of being fretted by bad news about her dissolute eldest son than of hearing anything to cheer her from Harold. She had begun to live merely in small immediate cares and occupations, and, like all eager-minded women who advance in life without any activity of tenderness or any large sympathy, she had contracted small rigid habits of thinking and acting, she had her "ways" which must not be crossed, and had learned to fill up the great void of life with giving small orders to tenants, insisting on medicines for injured cottagers, winning small triumphs in bargains and personal economies, and parrying ill-natured remarks of Lady Debarry's by lancet-edged epigrams. So her life had gone on till more than a year ago, when that desire which had been so hungry when she was a blooming young mother, was at last fulfilled — at last, when her hair was gray, and her face looked bitter, restless, and unenjoying, like her life. The news came from Jersey that Dufey, the imbecile son, was dead. *Now* Harold was heir to the estate; now the wealth he had gained could release the lands from its burthens; now he would think it worth while to return home. A change had at last come over her life, and the sunlight breaking the clouds at evening was pleasant, though the sun must sink before long. Hopes, affections, the sweeter part of her memories, started from their wintry sleep, and it once more seemed a great good to have had a second son who in some ways had cost her dearly. But again there were conditions she had not reckoned on. When the good tidings had been sent to Harold, and he had announced that he would return so soon as he could wind up his affairs, he had for the first time informed his mother that he had been married, that his Greek wife was no longer living, but that he should bring home a little boy, the finest and most desirable of heirs and grandsons. Harold, seated in his distant Smyrna home, considered that he was taking a rational view of what things must have become by this time at the old place in England, when he figured his mother as a good elderly lady, who would

necessarily be delighted with the possession on any terms of a healthy grandchild, and would not mind much about the particulars of the long-concealed marriage.

Mrs. Transome had torn up that letter in a rage. But in the months which had elapsed before Harold could actually arrive, she had prepared herself as well as she could to suppress all reproaches or queries which her son might resent, and to acquiesce in his evident wishes. The return was still looked for with longing; affection and satisfied pride would again warm her later years. She was ignorant what sort of man Harold had become now, and of course he must be changed in many ways; but though she told herself this, still the image that she knew, the image fondness clung to, necessarily prevailed over the negatives insisted on by her reason.

And so it was, that when she had moved to the door to meet him, she had been sure that she should clasp her son again, and feel that he was the same who had been her boy, her little one, the loved child of her passionate youth. An hour seemed to have changed everything for her. A woman's hopes are woven of sunbeams; a shadow annihilates them. The shadow which had fallen over Mrs. Transome in this first interview with her son was the presentiment of her powerlessness. If things went wrong, if Harold got unpleasantly disposed in a certain direction where her chief dread had always lain, she seemed to foresee that her words would be of no avail. The keenness of her anxiety in this matter had served as insight; and Harold's rapidity, decision, and indifference to any impressions in others which did not further or impede his own purposes, had made themselves felt by her as much as she would have felt the unmanageable strength of a great bird which had alighted near her, and allowed her to stroke its wing for a moment because food lay near her.

Under the cold weight of these thoughts Mrs. Transome shivered. That physical reaction roused her from her reverie, and she could now hear the gentle knocking at the door to which she had been deaf before. Notwithstanding her activity and the fewness of her servants, she had never dressed herself without aid; nor would that small, neat, exquisitely clean old woman who now presented herself have wished that her labor should be saved at the expense of such a sacrifice on her lady's part. The small old woman was Mrs. Hickes, the butler's wife, who acted as housekeeper, lady's-maid, and superintendent of the kitchen — the large stony scene of inconsiderable cooking. Forty years ago she had entered Mrs.

Transome's service, when that lady was beautiful Miss Lingon, and her mistress still called her Denner, as she had done in the old days.

"The bell has rung, then, Denner, without my hearing it?" said Mrs. Transome, rising.

"Yes, madam," said Denner, reaching from a wardrobe an old black velvet dress trimmed with much-mended point, in which Mrs. Transome was wont to look queenly of an evening.

Denner had still strong eyes of that short-sighted kind which sees through the narrowest chink between the eyelashes. The physical contrast between the tall, eagle-faced, dark-eyed lady, and the little peering waiting-woman, who had been round-featured and of pale mealy complexion from her youth up, had doubtless had a strong influence in determining Denner's feeling towards her mistress, which was of that worshipful sort paid to a goddess in ages when it was not thought necessary or likely that a goddess should be very moral. There were different orders of beings — so ran Denner's creed — and she belonged to another order than that to which her mistress belonged. She had a mind as sharp as a needle, and would have seen through and through the ridiculous pretensions of a born servant who did not submissively accept the rigid fate which had given her born superiors. She would have called such pretensions the wriggings of a worm that tried to walk on its tail. There was a tacit understanding that Denner knew all her mistress's secrets, and her speech was plain and unflattering; yet with wonderful subtlety of instinct she never said anything which Mrs. Transome could feel humiliated by, as by a familiarity from a servant who knew too much. Denner identified her own dignity with that of her mistress. She was a hard-headed godless little woman, but with a character to be reckoned on as you reckon on the qualities of iron.

Peering into Mrs. Transome's face, she saw clearly that the meeting with the son had been a disappointment in some way. She spoke with a refined accent, in a low, quick, monotonous tone, —

"Mr. Harold is drest; he shook me by the hand in the corridor, and was very pleasant."

"What an alteration, Denner! No likeness to me now."

"Handsome, though, spite of his being so browned and stout. There's a fine presence about Mr. Harold. I remember you used to say, madam, there were some people you would always know were in the room though they stood round

a corner, and others you might never see till you ran against them. That's as true as truth. And as for likenesses, thirty-five and sixty are not much alike, only to people's memories."

Mrs. Transome knew perfectly that Denner had divined her thoughts.

"I don't know how things will go on now; but it seems something too good to happen that they will go on well. I am afraid of ever expecting anything good again."

"That's weakness, madam. Things don't happen because they're bad or good, else all eggs would be addled or none at all, and at the most it is but six to the dozen. There's good chances and bad chances, and nobody's luck is pulled only by one string."

"What a woman you are, Denner! You talk like a French infidel. It seems to me you are afraid of nothing. I have been full of fears all my life — always seeing something or other hanging over me that I couldn't bear to happen."

"Well, madam, put a good face on it, and don't seem to be on the lookout for crows, else you'll set other people watching. Here you have a rich son come home, and the debts will all be paid, and you have your health and can ride about, and you've such a face and figure, and will have if you live to be eighty, that everybody is cap in hand to you before they know who you are — let me fasten up your veil a little higher: there's a good deal of pleasure in life for you yet."

"Nonsense! there's no pleasure for old women, unless they get it out of tormenting other people. What are your pleasures, Denner — besides being a slave to me?"

"Oh, there's pleasure in knowing one's not a fool, like half the people one sees about. And managing one's husband is some pleasure; and doing all one's business well. Why, if I've only got some orange flowers to candy, I shouldn't like to die till I see them all right. Then there's the sunshine now and then; I like that as the cats do. I look upon it, life is like our game at whist, when Banks and his wife come to the still-room of an evening. I don't enjoy the game much, but I like to play my cards well, and see what will be the end of it; and I want to see you make the best of your hand. madam, for your luck has been mine these forty years now. But I must go and see how Kitty dishes up the dinner, unless you have any more commands."

"No, Denner; I am going down immediately."

As Mrs. Transome descended the stone staircase in her old black velvet and point, her appearance justified Denner's per-

sonal compliment. She had that high-born imperious air which would have marked her as an object of hatred and reviling by a revolutionary mob. Her person was too typical of social distinctions to be passed by with indifference by any one: it would have fitted an empress in her own right, who had had to rule in spite of faction, to dare the violation of treaties and dread retributive invasions, to grasp after new territories, to be defiant in desperate circumstances, and to feel a woman's hunger of the heart forever unsatisfied. Yet Mrs. Transome's cares and occupations had not been at all of an imperial sort. For thirty years she had led the monotonous narrowing life which used to be the lot of our poorer gentry; who never went to town, and were probably not on speaking terms with two out of the five families whose parks lay within the distance of a drive. When she was young she had been thought wonderfully clever and accomplished, and had been rather ambitious of intellectual superiority — had secretly picked out for private reading the lighter parts of dangerous French authors — and in company had been able to talk of Mr. Burke's style, or of Chateaubriand's eloquence — had laughed at the Lyrical Ballads and admired Mr. Southey's Thalaba. She always thought that the dangerous French writers were wicked and that her reading of them was a sin; but many sinful things were highly agreeable to her, and many things which she did not doubt to be good and true were dull and meaningless. She found ridicule of Biblical characters very amusing, and she was interested in stories of illicit passion: but she believed all the while that truth and safety lay in due attendance on prayers and sermons, in the admirable doctrines and ritual of the Church of England, equally remote from Puritanism and Popery; in fact, in such a view of this world and the next as would preserve the existing arrangements of English society quite unshaken, keeping down the obtrusiveness of the vulgar and the discontent of the poor. The history of the Jews, she knew, ought to be preferred to any profane history; the Pagans, of course, were vicious, and their religions quite nonsensical, considered as religions — but classical learning came from the Pagans; the Greeks were famous for sculpture; the Italians for painting; the middle ages were dark and Papistical; but now Christianity went hand in hand with civilization, and the providential government of the world, though a little confused and entangled in foreign countries, in our favored land was clearly seen to be carried forward on Tory and Church of England

principles, sustained by the succession of the House of Brunswick, and by sound English divines. For Miss Lingon had had a superior governess, who held that a woman should be able to write a good letter, and to express herself with propriety on general subjects. And it is astonishing how effective this education appeared in a handsome girl, who sat supremely well on horseback, sang and played a little, painted small figures in water-colors, had a naughty sparkle in her eyes when she made a daring quotation, and an air of serious dignity when she recited something from her store of correct opinions. But however such a stock of ideas may be made to tell in elegant society, and during a few seasons in town, no amount of bloom and beauty can make them a perennial source of interest in things not personal; and the notion that what is true and, in general, good for mankind, is stupid and drug-like, is not a safe theoretic basis in circumstances of temptation and difficulty. Mrs. Transome had been in her bloom before this century began, and in the long painful years since then, what she had once regarded as her knowledge and accomplishments had become as valueless as old-fashioned stucco ornaments, of which the substance was never worth anything, while the form is no longer to the taste of any living mortal. Crosses, mortifications, money-cares, conscious blame-worthiness, had changed the aspect of the world for her: there was anxiety in the morning sunlight; there was unkind triumph or disapproving pity in the glances of greeting neighbors; there was advancing age, and a contracting prospect in the changing seasons as they came and went. And what could then sweeten the days to a hungry-much-exacting self like Mrs. Transome's? Under protracted ill every living creature will find some thing that makes a comparative ease, and even when life seems woven of pain, will convert the fainter pang into a desire. Mrs. Transome, whose imperious will had availed little to ward off the great evils of her life, found the opiate for her discontent in the exertion of her will about smaller things. She was not cruel, and could not enjoy thoroughly what she called the old woman's pleasure of tormenting; but she liked every little sign of power her lot had left her. She liked that a tenant should stand bareheaded below her as she sat on horseback. She liked to insist that work done without her orders should be undone from beginning to end. She liked to be courtesied and bowed to by all the congregation as she walked up the little barn of a church. She liked to change a laborer's medicine fetched

from the doctor, and substitute a prescription of her own. If she had only been more haggard and less majestic, those who had glimpses of her outward life might have said she was a tyrannical, griping harridan, with a tongue like a razor. No one said exactly that; but they never said anything like the full truth about her, or divined what was hidden under that outward life — a woman's keen sensibility and dread, which lay screened behind all her petty habits and narrow notions, as some quivering thing with eyes and throbbing heart may lie crouching behind withered rubbish. The sensibility and dread had palpitated all the faster in the prospect of her son's return; and now that she had seen him, she said to herself, in her bitter way, "It is a lucky eel that escapes skinning. The best happiness I shall ever know, will be to escape the worst misery."

CHAPTER II.

A jolly parson of the good old stock,
By birth a gentleman, yet homely too,
Sutling his phrase to Hodge and Margery
Whom he once christened, and has married since.
A little lax in doctrine and in life,
Not thinking God was captious in such things
As what a man might drink on holidays,
But holding true religion was to do
As you'd be done by — which could never mean
That he should preach three sermons in a week.

HAROLD TRANSOME did not choose to spend the whole evening with his mother. It was his habit to compress a great deal of effective conversation into a short space of time, asking rapidly all the questions he wanted to get answered, and diluting no subject with irrelevancies, paraphrase, or repetitions. He volunteered no information about himself and his past life at Smyrna, but answered pleasantly enough, though briefly, whenever his mother asked for any detail. He was evidently ill-satisfied as to his palate, trying red pepper to everything, then asking if there were any relishing sauces in the house, and when Hickes brought various home-filled bottles, trying several, finding them failures, and finally falling back from his plate in despair. Yet he remained good-humored, saying something to his father now and then for the sake of being kind, and looking on with a pitying shrug as he saw him watch Hickes cutting his food. Mrs. Transome thought with some bitterness that Harold showed

more feeling for her feeble husband who had never cared in the least about him, than for her, who had given him more than the usual share of mother's love. An hour after dinner, Harold, who had already been turning over the leaves of his mother's account-books, said, —

"I shall just cross the park to the parsonage to see my uncle Lingon."

"Very well. He can answer more questions for you."

"Yes," said Harold, quite deaf to the innuendo, and accepting the words as a simple statement of the fact. "I want to hear all about the game and the North Loamshire hunt. I'm fond of sport; we had a great deal of it at Smyrna, and it keeps down my fat."

The Reverend John Lingon became very talkative over his second bottle of port, which was opened on his nephew's arrival. He was not curious about the manners of Smyrna, or about Harold's experience, but he unbosomed himself very freely as to what he himself liked and disliked, which of the farmers he suspected of killing the foxes, what game he had bagged that very morning, what spot he would recommend as a new cover, and the comparative flatness of all existing sport compared with cock-fighting, under which Old England has been prosperous and glorious, while, so far as he could see, it had gained little by the abolition of a practice which sharpened the faculties of men, gratified the instincts of the fowl, and carried out the designs of heaven in its admirable device of spurs. From these main topics, which made his points of departure and return, he rambled easily enough at any new suggestion or query; so that when Harold got home at a late hour, he was conscious of having gathered from amidst the pompous full-toned triviality of his uncle's chat some impressions which were of practical importance. Among the Rector's dislikes, it appeared, was Mr. Matthew Jermyn.

"A fat-handed, glib-tongued fellow, with a scented cambric handkerchief; one of your educated low-bred fellows; a foundling who got his Latin for nothing at Christ's Hospital; one of your middle-class upstarts who want to rank with gentlemen, and think they'll do it with kid gloves and new furniture."

But since Harold meant to stand for the county, Mr. Lingon was equally emphatic as to the necessity of his not quarrelling with Jermyn till the election was over. Jermyn must be his agent; Harold must wink hard till he found him-

self safely returned; and even then it might be well to let Jermyn drop gently and raise no scandal. He himself had no quarrel with the fellow: a clergyman should have no quarrels, and he made it a point to be able to take wine with any man he met at table. And as to the estate, and his sister's going too much by Jermyn's advice, he never meddled with business: it was not his duty as a clergyman. That, he considered, was the meaning of Melchisedec and the tithe, a subject into which he had gone to some depth thirty years ago, when he preached the Visitation Sermon.

The discovery that Harold meant to stand on the liberal side — nay, that he boldly declared himself a Radical — was rather startling; but to his uncle's good-humor, beatified by the sipping of port-wine, nothing could seem highly objectionable, provided it did not disturb that operation. In the course of half an hour he had brought himself to see that anything really worthy to be called British Toryism had been entirely extinct since the Duke of Wellington and Sir Robert Peel had passed the Catholic Emancipation Bill; that Whiggery, with its rights of man stopping short at ten-pound householders, and its policy of pacifying a wild beast with a bite, was a ridiculous monstrosity; that therefore, since an honest man could not call himself a Tory, which it was, in fact, as impossible to be now as to fight for the old Pretender, and could still less become that execrable monstrosity a Whig, there remained but one course open to him. "Why, lad, if the world was turned into a swamp, I suppose we should leave off shoes and stockings, and walk about like cranes" — whence it followed plainly enough that, in these hopeless times, nothing was left to men of sense and good family but to retard the national ruin by declaring themselves Radicals, and take the inevitable process of changing everything out of the hands of beggarly demagogues and purse-proud tradesmen. It is true the Rector was helped to this chain of reasoning by Harold's remarks; but he soon became quite ardent in asserting the conclusion.

"If the mob can't be turned back, a man of family must try and head the mob, and save a few homes and hearths, and keep the country up on its last legs as long as he can. And you're a man of family, my lad — dash it! you're a Lingon, whatever else you may be, and I'll stand by you. I've no great interest; I'm a poor parson. I've been forced to give up hunting; my pointers and a glass of good wine are the only decencies becoming my station that I can allow myself.

But I'll give you my countenance — I'll stick to you as my nephew. There's no need for me to change sides exactly. I was born a Tory, and I shall never be a bishop. But if anybody says you're in the wrong, I shall say, 'My nephew is in the right; he has turned Radical to save his country. If William Pitt had been living now, he'd have done the same; for what did he say when he was dying? Not "O save my party!" but "O save my country, heaven!"' That was what they dinned in our ears about Peel and the Duke; and now I'll turn it round upon them. They shall be hoist with their own petard. Yes, yes, I'll stand by you."

Harold did not feel sure that his uncle would thoroughly retain this satisfactory thread of argument in the uninspired hours of the morning; but the old gentleman was sure to take the facts easily in the end, and there was no fear of family coolness or quarrelling on this side. Harold was glad of it. He was not to be turned aside from any course he had chosen; but he disliked all quarrelling as an unpleasant expenditure of energy that could have no good practical result. He was at once active and luxurious; fond of mastery, and good-natured enough to wish that every one about him should like his mastery; not caring greatly to know other people's thoughts, and ready to despise them as blockheads if their thoughts differed from his, and yet solicitous that they should have no colorable reason for slight thoughts about *him*. The blockheads must be forced to respect him. Hence, in proportion as he foresaw that his equals in the neighborhood would be indignant with him for his political choice, he cared keenly about making a good figure before them in every other way. His conduct as a landholder was to be judicious, his establishment was to be kept up generously, his imbecile father treated with careful regard, his family relations entirely without scandal. He knew that affairs had been unpleasant in his youth — that there had been ugly lawsuits — and that his scapegrace brother Durfey had helped to lower still farther the depressed condition of the family. All this must be retrieved, now that events had made Harold the head of the Transome name.

Jermyn must be used for the election, and after that, if he must be got rid of, it would be well to shake him loose quietly: his uncle was probably right on both these points. But Harold's expectation that he should want to get rid of Jermyn was founded on other reasons than his scented handkerchief and his charity-school Latin.

If the lawyer had been presuming on Mrs. Transome's ignorance as a woman, and on the stupid rakishness of the original heir, the new heir would prove to him that he had calculated rashly. Otherwise, Harold had no prejudice against him. In his boyhood and youth he had seen Jermyn frequenting Transome Court, but had regarded him with that total indifference with which youngsters are apt to view those who neither deny them pleasures nor give them any. Jermyn used to smile at him, and speak to him affably; but Harold, half proud, half shy, got away from such patronage as soon as possible: he knew Jermyn was a man of business; his father, his uncle, and Sir Maximus Debarry did not regard him as a gentleman and their equal. He had known no evil of the man; but he saw now that if he were really a covetous upstart, there had been a temptation for him in the management of the Transome affairs; and it was clear that the estate was in a bad condition.

When Mr. Jermyn was ushered into the breakfast-room the next morning, Harold found him surprisingly little altered by the fifteen years. He was gray, but still remarkably handsome; fat, but tall enough to bear that trial to man's dignity. There was as strong a suggestion of toilet about him as if he had been five and twenty instead of nearly sixty. He chose always to dress in black, and was especially addicted to black satin waistcoats, which carried out the general sleekness of his appearance; and this, together with his white, fat, but beautifully-shaped hands, which he was in the habit of rubbing gently on his entrance into a room, gave him very much the air of a lady's physician. Harold remembered with some amusement his uncle's dislike of those conspicuous hands: but as his own were soft and dimpled, and as he too was given to the innocent practice of rubbing those members, his suspicions were not yet deepened.

"I congratulate you, Mrs. Transome," said Jermyn, with a soft and deferential smile, "all the more," he added, turning towards Harold, "now I have the pleasure of actually seeing your son. I am glad to perceive that an Eastern climate has not been unfavorable to him."

"No," said Harold, shaking Jermyn's hand carelessly, and speaking with more than his usual rapid brusqueness, "the question is, whether the English climate will agree with me. It's deuced shifting and damp; and as for the food, it would be the finest thing in the world for this country if the southern cooks would change their religion, get persecuted, and fly to England, as the old silk-weavers did."

"There are plenty of foreign cooks for those who are rich enough to pay for them, I suppose," said Mrs. Transome, "but they are unpleasant people to have about one's house."

"Gad! I don't think so," said Harold.

"The old servants are sure to quarrel with them."

"That's no concern of mine. The old servants will have to put up with my man Dominic, who will show them how to cook and do everything else, in a way that will rather astonish them."

"Old people are not so easily taught to change all their ways, Harold."

"Well, they can give up and watch the young ones," said Harold, thinking only at that moment of old Mrs. Hickes and Dominic. But his mother was not thinking of them only.

"You have a valuable servant, it seems," said Jermyn, who understood Mrs. Transome better than her son did, and wished to smoothen the current of their dialogue.

"Oh, one of those wonderful southern fellows that make one's life easy. He's of no country in particular. I don't know whether he's most of a Jew, a Greek, an Italian, or a Spaniard. He speaks five or six languages, one as well as another. He's cook, valet, major-domo, and secretary all in one; and what's more, he's an affectionate fellow — I can trust to his attachment. That's a sort of human specimen that doesn't grow here in England, I fancy. I should have been badly off if I could not have brought Dominic."

They sat down to breakfast with such slight talk as this going on. Each of the party was preoccupied and uneasy. Harold's mind was busy constructing probabilities about what he should discover of Jermyn's mismanagement or dubious application of funds, and the sort of self-command he must in the worst case exercise in order to use the man as long as he wanted him. Jermyn was closely observing Harold with an unpleasant sense that there was an expression of acuteness and determination about him which would make him formidable. He would certainly have preferred at that moment that there had been no second heir of the Transome name to come back upon him from the East. Mrs. Transome was not observing the two men; rather, her hands were cold, and her whole person shaken by their presence; she seemed to hear and see what they said and did with preternatural acuteness, and yet she was also seeing and hearing what had been said and done many years before, and feeling a dim terror about the future. There were piteous sensibilities in this faded

woman, who thirty-four years ago, in the splendor of her bloom, had been imperious to one of these men, and had rapturously pressed the other as an infant to her bosom, and now knew that she was of little consequence to either of them.

"Well, what are the prospects about the election?" said Harold, as the breakfast was advancing. "There are two Whigs and one Conservative likely to be in the field, I know. What is your opinion of the chances?"

Mr. Jermyn had a copious supply of words, which often led him into periphrase, but he cultivated a hesitating stammer, which, with a handsome impassiveness of face, except when he was smiling at a woman, or when the latent savageness of his nature was thoroughly roused, he had found useful in many relations, especially in business. No one could have found out that he was not at his ease. "My opinion," he replied, "is in a state of balance at present. This division of the county, you are aware, contains one manufacturing town of the first magnitude, and several smaller ones. The manufacturing interest is widely dispersed. So far—a—there is a presumption—a—in favor of the two Liberal candidates. Still, with a careful canvass of the agricultural districts, such as those we have round us at Treby Magna, I think—a—the auguries—a—would not be unfavorable to the return of a Conservative. A fourth candidate of good position, who should coalesce with Mr. Debarry—a—"

Here Mr. Jermyn hesitated for the third time, and Harold broke in.

"That will not be my line of action, so we need not discuss it. If I put up, it will be as a Radical; and I fancy, in any county that would return Whigs there would be plenty of voters to be combed off by a Radical who offered himself with good pretensions."

There was the slightest possible quiver discernible across Jermyn's face. Otherwise he sat as he had done before, with his eyes fixed abstractedly on the frill of a ham before him, and his hand trifling with his fork. He did not answer immediately, but when he did, he looked round steadily at Harold.

"I'm delighted to perceive that you have kept yourself so thoroughly acquainted with English politics."

"Oh, of course," said Harold, impatiently. "I'm aware how things have been going on in England. I always meant to come back ultimately. I suppose I know the state of Europe as well as if I'd been stationary at Little Treby for the last fifteen

years. If a man goes to the East, people seem to think he gets turned into something like the one-eyed calender in the 'Arabian Nights.'"

"Yet I should think there are some things which people who have been stationary at Little Treby could tell you, Harold," said Mrs. Transome. "It did not signify about your holding Radical opinions at Smyrna; but you seem not to imagine how your putting up as a Radical will affect your position here, and the position of your family. No one will visit you. And then — the sort of people who will support you! You really have no idea what an impression it conveys when you say you are a Radical. There are none of our equals who will not feel that you have disgraced yourself."

"Pooh!" said Harold, rising and walking along the room.

But Mrs. Transome went on with growing anger in her voice — "It seems to me that a man owes something to his birth and station, and has no right to take up this notion or the other, just as it suits his fancy; still less to work at the overthrow of his class. That was what every one said of Lord Grey, and my family at least is as good as Lord Grey's. You have wealth now, and might distinguish yourself in the county; and if you had been true to your colors as a gentleman, you would have had all the greater opportunity because the times are so bad. The Debarrys and Lord Wyvern would have set all the more store by you. For my part, I can't conceive what good you propose to yourself. I only entreat you to think again before you take any decided step."

"Mother," said Harold, not angrily or with any raising of his voice, but in a quick, impatient manner, as if the scene must be got through as quickly as possible; "it is natural that you should think in this way. Women, very properly, don't change their views, but keep to the notions in which they have been brought up. It doesn't signify what they think — they are not called upon to judge or to act. You must really leave me to take my own course in these matters, which properly belong to men. Beyond that, I will gratify any wish you choose to mention. You shall have a new carriage and a pair of bays all to yourself; you shall have the house done up in first-rate style, and I am not thinking of marrying. But let us understand that there shall be no further collision between us on subjects on which I must be master of my own actions."

"And you will put the crown to the mortifications of my life, Harold. I don't know who would be a mother if she could foresee what a slight thing she will be to her son when she is old."

Mrs. Transome here walked out of the room by the nearest way — the glass door open towards the terrace. Mr. Jermyn had risen too, and his hands were on the back of his chair. He looked quite impassive: it was not the first time he had seen Mrs. Transome angry; but now, for the first time, he thought the outburst of her temper would be useful to him. She, poor woman, knew quite well that she had been unwise, and that she had been making herself disagreeable to Harold to no purpose. But half the sorrows of women would be averted if they could repress the speech they know to be useless — nay, the speech they have resolved not to utter. Harold continued his walking a moment longer, and then said to Jermyn, —

“You smoke?”

“No, I always defer to the ladies. Mrs. Jermyn is peculiarly sensitive in such matters, and doesn’t like tobacco.”

Harold, who, underneath all the tendencies which had made him a Liberal, had intense personal pride, thought, “Confound the fellow — with his Mrs. Jermyn! Does he think we are on a footing for me to know anything about his wife?”

“Well, I took my hookah before breakfast,” he said aloud; “so, if you like, we’ll go into the library. My father never gets up till mid-day, I find.”

“Sit down, sit down,” said Harold, as they entered the handsome, spacious library. But he himself continued to stand before a map of the county which he had opened from a series of rollers occupying a compartment among the bookshelves. “The first question, Mr. Jermyn, now you know my intentions, is, whether you will undertake to be my agent in this election, and help me through? There’s no time to be lost, and I don’t want to lose my chance, as I may not have another for seven years. I understand,” he went on, flashing a look straight at Jermyn, “that you have not taken any conspicuous course in politics; and I know that Labron is agent for the Debarrys.”

“Oh — a — my dear sir — a man necessarily has his political convictions, but of what use is it for a professional man — a — of some education, to talk of them in a little country town? There really is no comprehension of public questions in such places. Party feeling, indeed, was quite asleep here before the agitation about the Catholic Relief Bill. It is true that I concurred with our incumbent in getting up a petition against the Reform Bill, but I did not state my reasons. The weak points in that Bill are — a — too palpable, and I fancy you

and I should not differ much on that head. The fact is, when I knew that you were to come back to us, I kept myself in reserve, though I was much pressed by the friends of Sir James Clement, the Ministerial candidate, who is —”

“However, you will act for me — that’s settled?” said Harold.

“Certainly,” said Jermyn, inwardly irritated by Harold’s rapid manner of cutting him short.

“Which of the Liberal candidates, as they call themselves, has the better chance, eh?”

“I was going to observe that Sir James Clement has not so good a chance as Mr. Garstin, supposing that a third Liberal candidate presents himself. There are two senses in which a politician can be liberal” — here Mr. Jermyn smiled — “Sir James Clement is a poor baronet, hoping for an appointment, and can’t be expected to be liberal in that wider sense which commands majorities.”

“I wish this man were not so much of a talker,” thought Harold; “he’ll bore me. We shall see,” he said aloud, “what can be done in the way of combination. I’ll come down to your office after one o’clock if it will suit you?”

“Perfectly.”

“Ah, and you’ll have all the lists and papers and necessary information ready for me there. I must get up a dinner for the tenants, and we can invite whom we like besides the tenants. Just now, I’m going over one of the farms on hand with the bailiff. By the way, that’s a desperately bad business, having three farms unlet — how comes that about, eh?”

“That is precisely what I wanted to say a few words about to you. You have observed already how strongly Mrs. Transome takes certain things to heart. You can imagine that she has been severely tried in many ways. Mr. Transome’s want of health; Mr. Durfey’s habits — a —”

“Yes, yes.”

“She is a woman for whom I naturally entertain the highest respect, and she has had hardly any gratification for many years, except the sense of having affairs to a certain extent in her own hands. She objects to changes; she will not have a new style of tenants; she likes the old stock of farmers who milk their own cows, and send their younger daughters out to service: all this makes it difficult to do the best with the estate. I am aware things are not as they ought to be, for, in point of fact, an improved agricultural management is

a matter in which I take considerable interest, and the farm which I myself hold on the estate you will see, I think, to be in a superior condition. But Mrs. Transome is a woman of strong feeling, and I would urge you, my dear sir, to make the changes which you have, but which I had not the right to insist on, as little painful to her as possible."

"I shall know what to do, sir, never fear," said Harold, much offended.

"You will pardon, I hope, a perhaps undue freedom of suggestion from a man of my age, who has been so long in a close connection with the family affairs—a—I have never considered that connection simply in the light of business—a—"

"Damn him, I'll soon let him know that *I* do," thought Harold. But in proportion as he found Jermyn's manners annoying, he felt the necessity of controlling himself. He despised all persons who defeated their own projects by the indulgence of momentary impulses.

"I understand, I understand," he said aloud. "You've had more awkward business on your hands than usually falls to the share of a family lawyer. We shall set everything right by degrees. But now as to the canvassing. I've made arrangements with a first-rate man in London, who understands these matters thoroughly—a solicitor of course—he has carried no end of men into Parliament. I'll engage him to meet us at Duffield—say when?"

The conversation after this was driven carefully clear of all angles, and ended with determined amicableness. When Harold, in his ride an hour or two afterwards, encountered his uncle shouldering a gun, and followed by one black and one liver-spotted pointer, his muscular person with its red eagle face set off by a velveteen jacket and leather leggings, Mr. Lingon's first question was,—

"Well, lad, how have you got on with Jermyn?"

"Oh, I don't think I shall like the fellow. He's a sort of amateur gentleman. But I must make use of him. I expect whatever I get out of him will only be something short of fair pay for what he has got out of us. But I shall see."

"Ay, ay, use his gun to bring down your game, and after that beat the thief with the but-end. That's wisdom and justice and pleasure all in one—talking between ourselves as uncle and nephew. But I say, Harold, I was going to tell you, now I come to think of it, this is rather a nasty business, your calling yourself a Radical. I've been turning it over in

after-dinner speeches, but it looks awkward — it's not what people are used to — it wants a good deal of Latin to make it go down. I shall be worried about it at the sessions, and I can think of nothing neat enough to carry about in my pocket by way of answer."

"Nonsense, uncle! I remember what a good speechifier you always were; you'll never be at a loss. You only want a few more evenings to think of it."

"But you'll not be attacking the Church and the institutions of the country — you'll not be going those lengths; you'll keep up the bulwarks, and so on, eh?"

"No, I sha'n't attack the Church, only the incomes of the bishops, perhaps, to make them eke out the incomes of the poor clergy."

"Well, well, I have no objection to that. Nobody likes our Bishop: he's all Greek and greediness; too proud to dine with his own father. You may pepper the bishops a little. But you'll respect the constitution handed down, etc. — and you'll rally round the throne — and the King, God bless him, and the usual toasts, eh?"

"Of course, of course. I am a Radical only in rooting out abuses."

"That's the word I wanted, my lad!" said the Vicar, slapping Harold's knee. "That's a spool to wind a speech on. Abuses is the very word; and if anybody shows himself offended, he'll put the cap on for himself."

"I remove the rotten timbers," said Harold, inwardly amused, "and substitute fresh oak, that's all."

"Well done, my boy! By George, you'll be a speaker! But I say, Harold, I hope you've got a little Latin left. This young Debarry is a tremendous fellow at the classics, and walks on stilts to any length. He's one of the new Conservatives. Old Sir Maximus doesn't understand him at all."

"That won't do at the hustings," said Harold. "He'll get knocked off his stilts pretty quickly there."

"Bless me! it's astonishing how well you're up in the affairs of the country, my boy. But rub up a few quotations — '*Quod turpe bonis decebat Crispinum*' — and that sort of thing — just to show Debarry what you could do if you liked. But you want to ride on?"

"Yes; I have an appointment at Treby. Good-by."

"He's a cleverish chap," muttered the Vicar, as Harold rode away. "When he's had plenty of English exercise, and brought out his knuckle a bit, he'll be a Lingon again as he

used to be. I must go and see how Arabella takes his being a Radical. It's a little awkward; but a clergyman must keep peace in a family. Confound it! I'm not bound to love Toryism better than my own flesh and blood, and the manor I shoot over. That's a heathenish, Brutus-like sort of thing, as if Providence couldn't take care of the country without my quarrelling with my own sister's son!"

CHAPTER III.

'Twas town, yet country too; you felt the warmth
Of clustering houses in the wintry time;
Supped with a friend, and went by lantern home.
Yet from your chamber window you could hear
The tiny bleat of new-year'd lambs, or see
The children bend beside the hedgerow banks
To pluck the primroses.

TREBY MAGNA, on which the Reform Bill had thrust the new honor of being a polling-place, had been, at the beginning of the century, quite a typical old market-town, lying in pleasant sleepiness among green pastures, with a rush-fringed river meandering through them. Its principal street had various handsome and tall-windowed brick houses with walled gardens behind them; and at the end, where it widened into the market-place, there was the cheerful rough-stuccoed front of that excellent inn, the Marquis of Granby, where the farmers put up their gigs, not only on fair and market days, but on exceptional Sundays when they came to church. And the church was one of those fine old English structures worth travelling to see, standing in a broad churchyard with a line of solemn yew-trees beside it, and lifting a majestic tower and spire far above the red-and-purple roofs of the town. It was not large enough to hold all the parishioners of a parish which stretched over distant villages and hamlets; but then they were never so unreasonable as to wish to be all in at once, and had never complained that the space of a large side-chapel was taken up by tombs of the Debarrys, and shut in by a handsome iron screen. For when the black Benedictines ceased to pray and chant in this church, when the Blessed Virgin and St. Gregory were expelled, the Debarrys, as lords of the manor, naturally came next to Providence and took the place of the saints. Long before that time, indeed,

there had been a Sir Maximus Debarry who had been at the fortifying of the old castle, which now stood in ruins in the midst of the green pastures, and with its sheltering wall towards the north made an excellent strawyard for the pigs of Wace & Co., brewers of the celebrated Treby beer. Wace & Co. did not stand alone in the town as prosperous traders on a large scale, to say nothing of those who had retired from business; and in no country town of the same small size as Treby was there a larger proportion of families who had handsome sets of china without handles, hereditary punch-bowls, and large silver ladles with a Queen Anne's guinea in the centre. Such people naturally took tea and supped together frequently; and as there was no professional man or tradesman in Treby who was not connected by business, if not by blood, with the farmers of the district, the richer sort of these were much invited, and gave invitations in their turn. They played at whist, ate and drank generously, praised Mr. Pitt and the war as keeping up prices and religion, and were very humorous about each other's property, having much the same coy pleasure in allusions to their secret ability to purchase, as blushing lasses sometimes have in jokes about their secret preferences. The Rector was always of the Debarry family, associated only with county people, and was much respected for his affability; a clergyman who would have taken tea with the townspeople would have given a dangerous shock to the mind of a Treby Churchman.

Such was the old-fashioned, grazing, brewing, wool-packing, cheese-loading life of Treby Magna, until there befell new conditions, complicating its relation with the rest of the world, and gradually awakening in it that higher consciousness which is known to bring higher pains. First came the canal; next, the working of the coal-mines at Sproxtton, two miles off the town; and thirdly, the discovery of a saline spring, which suggested to a too constructive brain the possibility of turning Treby Magna into a fashionable watering-place. So daring an idea was not originated by a native Trebian, but by a young lawyer who came from a distance, knew the dictionary by heart, and was probably an illegitimate son of somebody or other. The idea, although it promised an increase of wealth to the town, was not well received at first; ladies objected to seeing "objects" drawn about in hand-carriages, the doctor foresaw the advent of unsound practitioners, and most retail tradesmen concurred with him that new doings were usually for the advantage of new

people. The more unanswerable reasoners urged that Treby had prospered without baths, and it was yet to be seen how it would prosper with them; while a report that the proposed name for them was Bethesda Spa, threatened to give the whole affair a blasphemous aspect. Even Sir Maximus Debarry, who was to have an unprecedented return for the thousands he would lay out on a pump-room and hotel, regarded the thing as a little too new, and held back for some time. But the persuasive powers of the young lawyer, Mr. Matthew Jermyn, together with the opportune opening of a stone-quarry, triumphed at last; the handsome buildings were erected, an excellent guide-book and descriptive cards, surmounted by vignettes, were printed, and Treby Magna became conscious of certain facts in its own history of which it had previously been in contented ignorance.

But it was all in vain. The Spa, for some mysterious reason, did not succeed. Some attributed the failure to the coal-mines and the canal; others to the peace, which had had ruinous effects on the country; and others, who disliked Jermyn, to the original folly of the plan. Among these last was Sir Maximus himself, who never forgave the too persuasive attorney; it was Jermyn's fault not only that a useless hotel had been built, but that he, Sir Maximus, being straitened for money, had at last let the building, with the adjacent land lying on the river, on a long lease, on the supposition that it was to be turned into a benevolent college, and had seen himself subsequently powerless to prevent its being turned into a tape manufactory — a bitter thing to any gentleman, and especially to the representative of one of the oldest families in England.

In this way it happened that Treby Magna gradually passed from being simply a respectable market-town — the heart of a great rural district, where the trade was only such as had close relations with the local landed interest — and took on the more complex life brought by mines and manufactures, which belong more directly to the great circulating system of the nation than to the local system to which they have been superadded; and in this way it was that Trebian Dissent gradually altered its character. Formerly it had been of a quiescent, well-to-do kind, represented architecturally by a small, venerable, dark-pewed chapel, built by Presbyterians, but long occupied by a sparse congregation of Independents, who were as little moved by doctrinal zeal as their church-going neighbors, and did not feel themselves

deficient in religious liberty, inasmuch as they were not hindered from occasionally slumbering in their pews, and were not obliged to go regularly to the weekly prayer-meeting. But when stone-pits and coal-pits made new hamlets that threatened to spread up to the very town, when the tape-weavers came with their news-reading inspectors and book-keepers, the Independent chapel began to be filled with eager men and women, to whom the exceptional possession of religious truth was the condition which reconciled them to a meagre existence, and made them feel in secure alliance with the unseen but supreme rule of a world in which their own visible part was small. There were Dissenters in Treby now who could not be regarded by the Church people in the light of old neighbors to whom the habit of going to chapel was an innocent, unenviable inheritance along with a particular house and garden, a tan-yard, or a grocery business—Dissenters who, in their turn, without meaning to be in the least abusive, spoke of the high-bred Rector as a blind leader of the blind. And Dissent was not the only thing that the times had altered; prices had fallen, poor-rates had risen, rent and tithe were not elastic enough, and the farmer's fat sorrow had become lean; he began to speculate on causes, and to trace things back to that causeless mystery, the cessation of one-pound notes. Thus, when political agitation swept in a great current through the country, Treby Magna was prepared to vibrate. The Catholic Emancipation Bill opened the eyes of neighbors, and made them aware how very injurious they were to each other and to the welfare of mankind generally. Mr. Tiliot, the Church spirit-merchant, knew now that Mr. Nuttwood, the obliging grocer, was one of those Dissenters, Deists, Socinians, Papists, and Radicals, who were in league to destroy the Constitution. A retired old London tradesman, who was believed to understand politics, said that thinking people must wish George the Third alive again in all his early vigor of mind; and even the farmers became less materialistic in their view of causes, and referred much to the agency of the devil and the Irish Romans. The Rector, the Rev. Augustus Debarry, really a fine specimen of the old-fashioned aristocratic clergyman, preaching short sermons, understanding business, and acting liberally about his tithe, had never before found himself in collision with Dissenters; but now he began to feel that these people were a nuisance in the parish, that his brother Sir Maximus must take care lest they should get land to build

more chapels, and that it might not have been a bad thing if the law had furnished him as a magistrate with a power of putting a stop to the political sermons of the Independent preacher, which, in their way, were as pernicious sources of intoxication as the beerhouses. The Dissenters, on their side, were not disposed to sacrifice the cause of truth and freedom to a temporizing mildness of language; but they defended themselves from the charge of religious indifference, and solemnly disclaimed any lax expectations that Catholics were likely to be saved — urging, on the contrary, that they were not too hopeful about Protestants who adhered to a bloated and worldly Prelacy. Thus Treby Magna, which had lived quietly through the great earthquakes of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars, which had remained unmoved by the “Rights of Man,” and saw little in Mr. Cobbett’s “Weekly Register” except that he held eccentric views about potatoes, began at last to know the higher pains of a dim political consciousness; and the development had been greatly helped by the recent agitation about the Reform Bill. Tory, Whig, and Radical did not perhaps become clearer in their definition of each other; but the names seemed to acquire so strong a stamp of honor or infamy, that definitions would only have weakened the impression. As to the short and easy method of judging opinions by the personal character of those who held them, it was liable to be much frustrated in Treby. It so happened in that particular town that the Reformers were not all of them large-hearted patriots or ardent lovers of justice; indeed, one of them, in the very midst of the agitation, was detected in using unequal scales — a fact to which many Tories pointed with disgust as showing plainly enough, without further argument, that the cry for a change in the representative system was hollow trickery. Again, the Tories were far from being all oppressors, disposed to grind down the working classes into serfdom; and it was undeniable that the inspector at the tape manufactory, who spoke with much eloquence on the extension of the suffrage, was a more tyrannical personage than open-handed Mr. Wace, whose chief political tenet was, that it was all nonsense giving men votes when they had no stake in the country. On the other hand, there were some Tories who gave themselves a great deal of leisure to abuse hypocrites, Radicals, Dissenters, and atheism generally, but whose inflamed faces, theistic swearing, and frankness in expressing a wish to borrow, certainly did not mark them out strongly as holding opinions likely to save society.

The Reformers had triumphed: it was clear that the wheels were going whither they were pulling, and they were in fine spirits for exertion. But if they were pulling towards the country's ruin, there was the more need for others to hang on behind and get the wheels to stick if possible. In Treby, as elsewhere, people were told they must "rally" at the coming election; but there was now a large number of waverers—men of flexible, practical minds, who were not such bigots as to cling to any views when a good tangible reason could be urged against them; while some regarded it as the most neighborly thing to hold a little with both sides, and were not sure that they should rally or vote at all. It seemed an invidious thing to vote for one gentleman rather than another.

These social changes in Treby parish are comparatively public matters, and this history is chiefly concerned with the private lot of a few men and women; but there is no private life which has not been determined by a wider public life, from the time when the primeval milkmaid had to wander with the wanderings of her clan, because the cow she milked was one of a herd which had made the pastures bare. Even in that conservatory existence where the fair *Camellia* is sighed for by the noble young *Pine-apple*, neither of them needing to care about the frost or rain outside, there is a nether apparatus of hot-water pipes liable to cool down on a strike of the gardeners or a scarcity of coal. And the lives we are about to look back upon do not belong to those conservatory species; they are rooted in the common earth, having to endure all the ordinary chances of past and present weather. As to the weather of 1832, the *Zadkiel* of that time had predicted that the electrical condition of the clouds in the political hemisphere would produce unusual perturbations in organic existence, and he would perhaps have seen a fulfilment of his remarkable prophecy in that mutual influence of dissimilar destinies which we shall see gradually unfolding itself. For if the mixed political conditions of Treby Magna had not been acted on by the passing of the Reform Bill, Mr. Harold Transome would not have presented himself as a candidate for North Loamshire, Treby would not have been a polling-place, Mr. Matthew Jermyn would not have been on affable terms with a Dissenting preacher and his flock, and the venerable town would not have been placarded with handbills, more or less complimentary and retrospective—conditions in this case essential to the "where," and the "what," without which, as the learned know, there can be no event whatever.

For example, it was through these conditions that a young man named Felix Holt made a considerable difference in the life of Harold Transome, though nature and fortune seemed to have done what they could to keep the lots of the two men quite aloof from each other. Felix was heir to nothing better than a quack medicine; his mother lived up a back street in Treby Magna, and her sitting-room was ornamented with her best tea-tray and several framed testimonials to the virtues of Holt's Cathartic Lozenges and Holt's Restorative Elixir. There could hardly have been a lot less like Harold Transome's than this of the quack doctor's son, except in the superficial facts that he called himself a Radical, that he was the only son of his mother, and that he had lately returned to his home with ideas and resolves not a little disturbing to that mother's mind.

But Mrs. Holt, unlike Mrs. Transome, was much disposed to reveal her troubles, and was not without a counsellor into whose ear she could pour them. On this 2d of September, when Mr. Harold Transome had had his first interview with Jermyn, and when the attorney went back to his office with new views of canvassing in his mind, Mrs. Holt had put on her bonnet as early as nine o'clock in the morning, and had gone to see the Rev. Rufus Lyon, minister of the Independent Chapel usually spoken of as "Malthouse Yard."

CHAPTER IV.

"A pious and painful preacher."—FULLER.

MR. LYON lived in a small house, not quite so good as the parish clerk's, adjoining the entry which led to the Chapel Yard. The new prosperity of Dissent at Treby had led to an enlargement of the chapel, which absorbed all extra funds and left none for the enlargement of the minister's income. He sat this morning, as usual, in a low up-stairs room, called his study, which, by means of a closet capable of holding his bed, served also as a sleeping-room. The book-shelves did not suffice for his store of old books, which lay about him in piles so arranged as to leave narrow lanes between them; for the minister was much given to walking about during his hours of meditation, and very narrow passages would serve for his small

legs, unencumbered by any other drapery than his black silk stockings and the flexible, though prominent, bows of black ribbon that tied his knee-breeches. He was walking about now, with his hands clasped behind him, an attitude in which his body seemed to bear about the same proportion to his head as the lower part of a stone Hermes bears to the carven image that crowns it. His face looked old and worn, yet the curtain of hair that fell from his bald crown and hung about his neck retained much of its original auburn tint, and his large, brown, short-sighted eyes were still clear and bright. At the first glance, every one thought him a very odd-looking rusty old man; the free-school boys often hooted after him, and called him "Revelations;" and to many respectable Church people, old Lyon's little legs and large head seemed to make Dissent additionally preposterous. But he was too short-sighted to notice those who tittered at him—too absent from the world of small facts and petty impulses in which titterers live. With Satan to argue against on matters of vital experience as well as of church government, with great texts to meditate on, which seemed to get deeper as he tried to fathom them, it had never occurred to him to reflect what sort of image his small person made on the retina of a light-minded beholder. The good Rufus had his ire and his egoism; but they existed only as the red heat which gave force to his belief and his teaching. He was susceptible concerning the true office of deacons in the primitive Church, and his small nervous body was jarred from head to foot by the concussion of an argument to which he saw no answer. In fact, the only moments when he could be said to be really conscious of his body, were when he trembled under the pressure of some agitating thought.

He was meditating on the text for his Sunday morning sermon, "And all the people said, Amen"—a mere mustard-seed of a text, which had split at first only into two divisions, "What was said," and "Who said it;" but these were growing into a many-branched discourse, and the preacher's eyes dilated, and a smile played about his mouth till, as his manner was, when he felt happily inspired, he had begun to utter his thoughts aloud in the varied measure and cadence habitual to him, changing from a rapid but distinct undertone to a loud emphatic *rallentando*.

"My brethren, do you think that great shout was raised in Israel by each man's waiting to say 'amen' till his neighbors had said amen? Do you think there will ever be a great shout for the right—the shout of a nation as of one man,

rounded and whole, like the voice of the archangel that bound together all the listeners of earth and heaven — if every Christian of you peeps round to see what his neighbors in good coats are doing, or else puts his hat before his face that he may shout and never be heard? But this is what you do: when the servant of God stands up to deliver his message, do you lay your souls beneath the Word as you set out your plants beneath the falling rain? No; one of you sends his eyes to all corners, he smothers his soul with small questions, 'What does brother Y. think?' — 'Is this doctrine high enough for brother Z.?' — 'Will the church members be pleased?' And another —"

Here the door was opened, and old Lyddy, the minister's servant, put in her head to say, in a tone of despondency, finishing with a groan, "Here is Mrs. Holt wanting to speak to you; she says she comes out of season, but she's in trouble."

"Lyddy," said Mr. Lyon, falling at once into a quiet conversational tone, "if you are wrestling with the enemy, let me refer you to Ezekiel the thirteenth and twenty-second, and beg of you not to groan. It is a stumbling-block and offence to my daughter; she would take no broth yesterday, because she said you had cried into it. Thus you cause the truth to be lightly spoken of, and make the enemy rejoice. If your faceache gives him an advantage, take a little warm ale with your meat — I do not grudge the money."

"If I thought my drinking warm ale would hinder poor dear Miss Esther from speaking light — but she hates the smell of it."

"Answer not again, Lyddy, but send up Mistress Holt to me."

Lyddy closed the door immediately.

"I lack grace to deal with these weak sisters," said the minister, again thinking aloud, and walking. "Their needs lie too much out of the track of my meditations, and take me often unawares. Mistress Holt is another who darkens counsel by words without knowledge, and angers the reason of the natural man. Lord, give me patience. My sins were heavier to bear than this woman's folly. Come in, Mrs. Holt — come in."

He hastened to disencumber a chair of Matthew Henry's Commentary, and begged his visitor to be seated. She was a tall elderly woman, dressed in black, with a light-brown front and a black band over her forehead. She moved the chair a little and seated herself in it with some emphasis, looking

fixedly at the opposite wall with a hurt and argumentative expression. Mr. Lyon had placed himself in the chair against his desk, and waited with the resolute resignation of a patient who is about to undergo an operation. But his visitor did not speak.

"You have something on your mind, Mrs. Holt?" he said, at last.

"Indeed I have, sir, else I shouldn't be here."

"Speak freely."

"It's well known to you, Mr. Lyon, that my husband, Mr. Holt, came from the north, and was a member in Malthouse Yard long before *you* began to be pastor of it, which was seven year ago last Michaelmas. It's the truth, Mr. Lyon, and I'm not that woman to sit here and say it if it wasn't true."

"Certainly, it is true."

"And if my husband had been alive when you'd come to preach upon trial, he'd have been as good a judge of your gifts as Mr. Nuttwood or Mr. Muscat, though whether he'd have agreed with some that your doctrine wasn't high enough, I can't say. For myself, I've my opinion about high doctrine."

"Was it my preaching you came to speak about?" said the minister, hurrying in the question.

"No, Mr. Lyon, I'm not that woman. But this I *will* say, for my husband died before your time, that he had a wonderful gift in prayer, as the old members well know, if anybody likes to ask 'em, not believing my words; and he believed himself that the receipt for the Cancer Cure, which I've sent out in bottles till this very last April before September as now is, and have bottles standing by me, — he believed it was sent to him in answer to prayer; and nobody can deny it, for he prayed most regular, and read out of the green baize Bible."

Mrs. Holt paused, appearing to think that Mr. Lyon had been successfully confuted, and should show himself convinced.

"Has any one been aspersing your husband's character?" said Mr. Lyon, with a slight initiative towards that relief of groaning for which he had reproved Lyddy.

"Sir, they daredn't. For though he was a man of prayer, he didn't want skill and knowledge to find things out for himself; and that was what I used to say to *my* friends when they wondered at my marrying a man from Lancashire, with no trade nor fortune but what he'd got in his head. But my husband's tongue 'ud have been a fortune to anybody, and there was many a one said it was as good as a dose of physic to hear him talk; not but what that got him into trouble in

Lancashire, but he always said, if the worst came to the worst, he could go and preach to the blacks. But he did better than that, Mr. Lyon, for he married me; and this I *will* say, that for age, and conduct, and managing — ”

“Mistress Holt,” interrupted the minister, “these are not the things whereby we may edify one another. Let me beg of you to be as brief as you can. My time is not my own.”

“Well, Mr. Lyon, I’ve a right to speak to my own character; and I’m one of your congregation, though I’m not a church member, for I was born in the General Baptist connection: and as for being saved without works, there’s a many, I dare say, can’t do without that doctrine; but I thank the Lord I never needed to put *myself* on a level with the thief on the cross. I’ve done *my* duty, and more, if anybody comes to that; for I’ve gone without my bit of meat to make broth for a sick neighbor: and if there’s any of the church members say they’ve done the same, I’d ask them if they had the sinking at the stomach as I have; for I’ve ever strove to do the right thing, and more, for good-natured I always was; and I little thought, after being respected by everybody, I should come to be reproached by my own son. And my husband said when he was a-dying — ‘Mary,’ he said, ‘the Elixir, and the Pills, and the Cure will support you, for they’ve a great name in all the country round, and you’ll pray for a blessing on them.’ And so I have done, Mr. Lyon; and to say they’re not good medicines, when they’ve been taken for fifty miles round by high and low, and rich and poor, and nobody speaking against ’em but Dr. Lukin, it seems to me it’s a flying in the face of Heaven; for if it was wrong to take the medicines, couldn’t the blessed Lord have stopped it?”

Mrs. Holt was not given to tears; she was much sustained by conscious unimpeachableness, and by an argumentative tendency which usually checks the too great activity of the lachrymal gland; nevertheless her eyes had become moist, her fingers played on her knee in an agitated manner, and she finally plucked a bit of her gown and held it with great nicety between her thumb and finger. Mr. Lyon, however, by listening attentively, had begun partly to divine the source of her trouble.

“Am I wrong in gathering from what you say, Mistress Holt, that your son has objected in some way to your sale of your late husband’s medicines?”

“Mr. Lyon, he’s masterful beyond everything, and he talks more than his father did. I’ve got my reason, Mr. Lyon, and

if anybody talks sense I can follow him; but Felix talks so wild, and contradicts his mother. And what do you think he says, after giving up his 'prenticeship, and going off to study at Glasgow, and getting through all the bit of money his father saved for his bringing-up — what has all his learning come to? He says I'd better never open my Bible, for it's as bad poison to me as the pills are to half the people as swallow 'em. You'll not speak of this again, Mr. Lyon — I don't think ill enough of you to believe *that*. For I suppose a Christian can understand the word o' God without going to Glasgow, and there's texts upon texts about ointment and medicine, and there's one as might have been made for a receipt of my husband's — it's just as if it was a riddle, and Holt's Elixir was the answer."

"Your son uses rash words, Mistress Holt," said the minister, "but it is quite true that we may err in giving a too private interpretation to the Scripture. The word of God has to satisfy the larger needs of His people, like the rain and the sunshine — which no man must think to be meant for his own patch of seed-ground solely. Will it not be well that I should see your son, and talk with him on these matters? He was at chapel, I observed, and I suppose I am to be his pastor."

"That was what I wanted to ask you, Mr. Lyon. For perhaps he'll listen to you, and not talk you down as he does his poor mother. For after we'd been to chapel, he spoke better of you than he does of most: he said you was a fine old fellow, and an old-fashioned Puritan — he uses dreadful language, Mr. Lyon; but I saw he didn't mean you ill, for all that. He calls most folks' religion rottenness; and yet another time he'll tell me I ought to feel myself a sinner, and do God's will and not my own. But it's my belief he says first one thing and then another only to abuse his mother. Or else he's going off his head, and must be sent to a 'sylum. But if he writes to the *North Loamshire Herald* first, to tell everybody the medicines are good for nothing, how can I ever keep him and myself?"

"Tell him I shall feel favored if he will come and see me this evening," said Mr. Lyon, not without a little prejudice in favor of the young man, whose language about the preacher in Malthouse Yard did not seem to him to be altogether dreadful. "Meanwhile, my friend, I counsel you to send up a supplication, which I shall not fail to offer also, that you may receive a spirit of humility and submission, so that

you may not be hindered from seeing and following the Divine guidance in this matter by any false lights of pride and obstinacy. Of this more when I have spoken with your son."

"I'm not proud or obstinate, Mr. Lyon. I never did say I was everything that was bad, and I never will. And why this trouble should be sent on me above everybody else—for I haven't told you all. He's made himself a journeyman to Mr. Prowd the watchmaker—after all this learning—and he says he'll go with patches on his knees, and he shall like himself the better. And as for his having little boys to teach, they'll come in all weathers with dirty shoes. If it's madness, Mr. Lyon, it's no use your talking to him."

"We shall see. Perhaps it may even be the disguised working of grace within him. We must not judge rashly. Many eminent servants of God have been led by ways as strange."

"Then I'm sorry for their mothers, that's all, Mr. Lyon; and all the more if they'd been well-spoken-on women. For not my biggest enemy, whether it's he or she, if they'll speak the truth, can turn round and say I've deserved this trouble. And when everybody gets their due, and people's doings are spoke of on the house-tops, as the Bible says they will be, it'll be known what I've gone through with those medicines—the pounding and the pouring, and the letting stand, and the weighing—up early and down late—there's nobody knows yet but One that's worthy to know; and the pasting o' the printed labels right side upwards. There's few women would have gone through with it; and it's reasonable to think it'll be made up to me; for if there's promised and purchased blessings, I should think this trouble is purchasing 'em. For if my son Felix doesn't have a strait-waistcoat put on him, he'll have his way. But I say no more. I wish you good-morning, Mr. Lyon, and thank you, though I well know it's your duty to act as you're doing. And I never troubled you about my own soul, as some do who look down on me for not being a church member."

"Farewell, Mistress Holt, farewell. I pray that a more powerful teacher than I am may instruct you."

The door was closed, and the much-tried Rufus walked about again, saying aloud, groaningly,—

"This woman has sat under the Gospel all her life, and she is as blind as a heathen, and as proud and stiff-necked as a Pharisee; yet she is one of the souls I watch for. 'Tis true that even Sara, the chosen mother of God's people, showed a spirit of unbelief, and perhaps of selfish anger; and it is a

passage that bears the unmistakable signet, 'doing honor to the wife or woman, as unto the weaker vessel.' For therein is the greatest check put on the ready scorn of the natural man."

CHAPTER V.

- 1ST CITIZEN. Str, there's a burry in the veins of youth
That makes a vice of virtue by excess.
2D CITIZEN. What if the coolness of our tardier veins
Be loss of virtue?
1ST CITIZEN. All things cool with time —
The sun itself, they say, till heat shall find
A general level, nowhere in excess.
2D CITIZEN. 'Tis a poor climax, to my weaker thought,
That future middlingness.

IN the evening, when Mr. Lyon was expecting the knock at the door that would announce Felix Holt, he occupied his cushionless arm-chair in the sitting-room, and was skimming rapidly, in his short-sighted way, by the light of one candle, the pages of a missionary report, emitting occasionally a slight "Hm-m" that appeared to be expressive of criticism rather than of approbation. The room was dismally furnished, the only objects indicating an intention of ornament being a book-case, a map of the Holy Land, an engraved portrait of Dr. Doddridge, and a black bust with a colored face, which for some reason or other was covered with green gauze. Yet any one whose attention was quite awake must have been aware, even on entering, of certain things that were incongruous with the general air of sombreness and privation. There was a delicate scent of dried rose-leaves; the light by which the minister was reading was a wax-candle in a white earthenware candlestick, and the table on the opposite side of the fireplace held a dainty work-basket frilled with blue satin.

Felix Holt, when he entered, was not in an observant mood; and when, after seating himself, at the minister's invitation, near the little table which held the work-basket, he stared at the wax-candle opposite to him, he did so without any wonder or consciousness that the candle was not of tallow. But the minister's sensitiveness gave another interpretation to the gaze which he divined rather than saw; and in alarm lest this inconsistent extravagance should obstruct his usefulness, he hastened to say, —

"You are doubtless amazed to see me with a wax-light, my young friend; but this undue luxury is paid for with the earn-

ings of my daughter, who is so delicately framed that the smell of tallow is loathsome to her."

"I heeded not the candle, sir. I thank Heaven I am not a mouse to have a nose that takes note of wax or tallow."

The loud abrupt tones made the old man vibrate a little. He had been stroking his chin gently before, with a sense that he must be very quiet and deliberate in his treatment of the eccentric young man; but now, quite unreflectingly, he drew forth a pair of spectacles, which he was in the habit of using when he wanted to observe his interlocutor more closely than usual.

"And I myself, in fact, am equally indifferent," he said, as he opened and adjusted his glasses, "so that I have a sufficient light on my book." Here his large eyes looked discerningly through the spectacles.

"'Tis the quality of the page you care about, not of the candle," said Felix, smiling pleasantly enough at his inspector. "You're thinking that you have a roughly-written page before you now."

That was true. The minister, accustomed to the respectable air of provincial townsmen, and especially to the sleek well-clipped gravity of his own male congregation, felt a slight shock as his glasses made perfectly clear to him the shaggy-headed, large-eyed, strong-limbed person of this questionable young man, without waistcoat or cravat. But the possibility, supported by some of Mrs. Holt's words, that a disguised work of grace might be going forward in the son of whom she complained so bitterly, checked any hasty interpretations.

"I abstain from judging by the outward appearance only," he answered, with his usual simplicity. "I myself have experienced that when the spirit is much exercised it is difficult to remember neck-bands and strings and such small accidents of our vesture, which are nevertheless decent and needful so long as we sojourn in the flesh. And you, too, my young friend, as I gather from your mother's troubled and confused report, are undergoing some travail of mind. You will not, I trust, object to open yourself fully to me, as to an aged pastor who has himself had much inward wrestling, and has especially known much temptation from doubt."

"As to doubt," said Felix, loudly and brusquely as before, "if it is those absurd medicines and gulling advertisements that my mother has been talking of to you — and I suppose it is — I've no more doubt about *them* than I have about pocket-picking. I know there's a stage of speculation in

which a man may doubt whether a pickpocket is blameworthy — but I'm not one of your subtle fellows who keep looking at the world through their own legs. If I allowed the sale of those medicines to go on, and my mother to live out of the proceeds when I can keep her by the honest labor of my hands, I've not the least doubt that I should be a rascal."

"I would fain inquire more particularly into your objection to these medicines," said Mr. Lyon, gravely. Notwithstanding his conscientiousness and a certain originality in his own mental disposition, he was too little used to high principle quite dissociated from sectarian phraseology to be as immediately in sympathy with it as he would otherwise have been. "I know they have been well reported of, and many wise persons have tried remedies providentially discovered by those who are not regular physicians, and have found a blessing in the use of them. I may mention the eminent Mr. Wesley, who, though I hold not altogether with his Arminian doctrine, nor with the usages of his institution, was nevertheless a man of God; and the journals of various Christians whose names have left a sweet savor might be cited in the same sense. Moreover, your father, who originally concocted these medicines and left them as a provision for your mother, was, as I understand, a man whose walk was not unfaithful."

"My father was ignorant," said Felix, bluntly. "He knew neither the complication of the human system, nor the way in which drugs counteract each other. Ignorance is not so damnable as humbug, but when it prescribes pills it may happen to do more harm. I know something about these things. I was 'prentice for five miserable years to a stupid brute of a country apothecary — my poor father left money for that — he thought nothing could be finer for me. No matter: I know that the Cathartic Pills are a drastic compound which may be as bad as poison to half the people who swallow them; that the Elixir is an absurd farrago of a dozen incompatible things; and that the Cancer Cure might as well be bottled ditch-water."

Mr. Lyon rose and walked up and down the room. His simplicity was strongly mixed with sagacity as well as sectarian prejudice, and he did not rely at once on a loud-spoken integrity — Satan might have flavored it with ostentation. Presently he asked, in a rapid low tone, "How long have you known this, young man?"

"Well put, sir," said Felix. "I've known it a good deal longer than I have acted upon it, like plenty of other things. But you believe in conversion?"

"Yea, verily."

"So do I. I was converted by six weeks' debauchery."

The minister started. "Young man," he said, solemnly, going up close to Felix and laying a hand on his shoulder, "speak not lightly of the Divine operations, and restrain unseemly words."

"I'm not speaking lightly," said Felix. "If I had not seen that I was making a hog of myself very fast, and that pig-wash, even if I could have got plenty of it, was a poor sort of thing, I should never have looked life fairly in the face to see what was to be done with it. I laughed out loud at last to think of a poor devil like me, in a Scotch garret, with my stockings out at heel and a shilling or two to be dissipated upon, with a smell of raw haggis mounting from below, and old women breathing gin as they passed me on the stairs — wanting to turn my life into easy pleasure. Then I began to see what else it could be turned into. Not much, perhaps. This world is not a very fine place for a good many of the people in it. But I've made up my mind it sha'n't be the worse for me, if I can help it. They may tell me I can't alter the world — that there must be a certain number of sneaks and robbers in it, and if I don't lie and filch somebody else will. Well, then, somebody else shall, for I won't. That's the upshot of my conversion, Mr. Lyon, if you want to know it."

Mr. Lyon removed his hand from Felix's shoulder and walked about again. "Did you sit under any preacher at Glasgow, young man?"

"No: I heard most of the preachers once, but I never wanted to hear them twice."

The good Rufus was not without a slight rising of resentment at this young man's want of reverence. It was not yet plain whether he wanted to hear twice the preacher in Malt-house Yard. But the resentful feeling was carefully repressed: a soul in so peculiar a condition must be dealt with delicately.

"And now, may I ask," he said, "what course you mean to take, after hindering your mother from making and selling these drugs? I speak no more in their favor after what you have said. God forbid that I should strive to hinder you from seeking whatsoever things are honest and honorable. But your mother is advanced in years; she needs comfortable sustenance; you have doubtless considered how you may make her amends? 'He that provideth not for his own —' I trust you respect the authority that so speaks. And I will

not suppose that, after being tender of conscience towards strangers, you will be careless towards your mother. There be indeed some who, taking a mighty charge on their shoulders, must perforce leave their households to Providence, and to the care of humbler brethren, but in such a case the call must be clear."

"I shall keep my mother as well — nay, better — than she has kept herself. She has always been frugal. With my watch and clock cleaning, and teaching one or two little chaps that I've got to come to me, I can earn enough. As for me, I can live on bran porridge. I have the stomach of a rhinoceros."

"But for a young man so well furnished as you, who can questionless write a good hand and keep books, were it not well to seek some higher situation as clerk or assistant? I could speak to Brother Muscat, who is well acquainted with all such openings. Any place in Pendrell's Bank, I fear, is now closed against such as are not Churchmen. It used not to be so, but a year ago he discharged Brother Bodkin, although he was a valuable servant. Still, something might be found. There are ranks and degrees — and those who can serve in the higher must not unadvisedly change what seems to be a providential appointment. Your poor mother is not altogether —"

"Excuse me, Mr. Lyon; I've had all that out with my mother, and I may as well save you any trouble by telling you that my mind has been made up about that a long while ago. I'll take no employment that obliges me to prop up my chin with a high cravat, and wear straps, and pass the livelong day with a set of fellows who spend their spare money on shirt-pins. That sort of work is really lower than many handicrafts; it only happens to be paid out of proportion. That's why I set myself to learn the watchmaking trade. My father was a weaver first of all. It would have been better for him if he had remained a weaver. I came home through Lancashire and saw an uncle of mine who is a weaver still. I mean to stick to the class I belong to — people who don't follow the fashions."

Mr. Lyon was silent a few moments. This dialogue was far from plain sailing; he was not certain of his latitude and longitude. If the despiser of Glasgow preachers had been arguing in favor of gin and Sabbath-breaking, Mr. Lyon's course would have been clearer. "Well, well," he said, deliberately, "it is true that St. Paul exercised the trade of tent-

making, though he was learned in all the wisdom of the Rabbis."

"St. Paul was a wise man," said Felix. "Why should I want to get into the middle class because I have some learning? The most of the middle class are as ignorant as the working people about everything that doesn't belong to their own Brummagem life. That's how the working men are left to foolish devices and keep worsening themselves: the best heads among them forsake their born comrades, and go in for a house with a high door-step and a brass knocker."

Mr. Lyon stroked his mouth and chin, perhaps because he felt some disposition to smile; and it would not be well to smile too readily at what seemed but a weedy resemblance of Christian unworldliness. On the contrary, there might be a dangerous snare in an unsanctified outstepping of average Christian practice.

"Nevertheless," he observed, gravely, "it is by such self-advancement that many have been enabled to do good service to the cause of liberty and to the public well-being. The ring and the robe of Joseph were no objects for a good man's ambition, but they were the signs of that credit which he won by his divinely-inspired skill, and which enabled him to act as a savior to his brethren."

"Oh yes, your ringed and scented men of the people! — I won't be one of them. Let a man once throttle himself with a satin stock, and he'll get new wants and new motives. Metamorphosis will have begun at his neck-joint, and it will go on till it has changed his likings first and then his reasoning, which will follow his likings as the feet of a hungry dog follow his nose. I'll have none of your clerky gentility. I might end by collecting greasy pence from poor men to buy myself a fine coat and a glutton's dinner, on pretence of serving the poor men. I'd sooner be Paley's fat pigeon than a demagogue all tongue and stomach, though" — here Felix changed his voice a little — "I should like well enough to be another sort of demagogue, if I could."

"Then you have a strong interest in the great political movements of these times?" said Mr. Lyon, with a perceptible flashing of the eyes.

"I should think so. I despise every man who has not — or, having it, doesn't try to rouse it in other men."

"Right, my young friend, right," said the minister, in a deep cordial tone. Inevitably his mind was drawn aside from the immediate consideration of Felix Holt's spiritual interest

by the prospect of political sympathy. In those days so many instruments of God's cause in the fight for religious and political liberty held creeds that were painfully wrong, and, indeed, irreconcilable with salvation! "That is my own view, which I maintain in the face of some opposition from brethren who contend that a share in public movements is a hindrance to the closer walk, and that the pulpit is no place for teaching men their duties as members of the commonwealth. I have had much puerile blame cast upon me because I have uttered such names as Brougham and Wellington in the pulpit. Why not Wellington as well as Rabshakeh? and why not Brougham as well as Balaam? Does God know less of men than He did in the days of Hezekiah and Moses? — is His arm shortened, and is the world become too wide for His providence? But, they say, there are no politics in the New Testament —"

"Well, they're right enough there," said Felix, with his usual unceremoniousness.

"What! you are of those who hold that a Christian minister should not meddle with public matters in the pulpit?" said Mr. Lyon, coloring. "I am ready to join issue on that point."

"Not I, sir," said Felix; "I should say, teach any truth you can, whether it's in the Testament or out of it. It's little enough anybody can get hold of, and still less what he can drive into the skulls of a pence-counting, parcel-tying generation, such as mostly fill your chapels."

"Young man," said Mr. Lyon, pausing in front of Felix. He spoke rapidly, as he always did, except when his words were specially weighted with emotion: he overflowed with matter, and in his mind matter was always completely organized into words. "I speak not on my own behalf, for not only have I no desire that any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, but I am aware of much that should make me patient under a disesteem resting even on too hasty a construction. I speak not as claiming reverence for my own age and office — not to shame you, but to warn you. It is good that you should use plainness of speech, and I am not of those who would enforce a submissive silence on the young, that they themselves, being elders, may be heard at large; for Elihu was the youngest of Job's friends, yet was there a wise rebuke in his words; and the aged Eli was taught by a revelation to the boy Samuel. I have to keep a special watch over myself in this matter, inasmuch as I have a need of ut-

terance which makes the thought within me seem as a pent-up fire, until I have shot it forth, as it were, in arrowy words, each one hitting its mark. Therefore I pray for a listening spirit, which is a great mark of grace. Nevertheless, my young friend, I am bound, as I said, to warn you. The temptations that most beset those who have great natural gifts, and are wise after the flesh, are pride and scorn, more particularly towards those weak things of the world which have been chosen to confound the things which are mighty. The scornful nostril and the high head gather not the odors that lie on the track of truth. The mind that is too ready at contempt and reprobation is — ”

Here the door opened, and Mr. Lyon paused to look round, but seeing only Lyddy with the tea-tray, he went on, —

“Is, I may say, as a clinched fist that can give blows, but is shut up from receiving and holding aught that is precious — though it were heaven-sent manna.”

“I understand you, sir,” said Felix, good-humoredly, putting out his hand to the little man, who had come close to him as he delivered the last sentence with sudden emphasis and slowness. “But I’m not inclined to clinch my fist at you.”

“Well, well,” said Mr. Lyon, shaking the proffered hand, “we shall see more of each other, and I trust shall have much profitable communing. You will stay and have a dish of tea with us: we take the meal late on Thursdays, because my daughter is detained by giving a lesson in the French tongue. But she is doubtless returned now, and will presently come and pour out tea for us.”

“Thank you, I’ll stay,” said Felix, not from any curiosity to see the minister’s daughter, but from a liking for the society of the minister himself — for his quaint looks and ways, and the transparency of his talk, which gave a charm even to his weaknesses. The daughter was probably some prim Miss, neat, sensible, pious, but all in a small feminine way, in which Felix was no more interested than in Dorcas meetings, biographies of devout women, and that amount of ornamental knitting which was not inconsistent with Nonconforming seriousness.

“I’m perhaps a little too fond of banging and smashing,” he went on; “a phrenologist at Glasgow told me I had large veneration; another man there, who knew me, laughed out and said I was the most blasphemous iconoclast living. ‘That,’ says my phrenologist, ‘is because of his large Ideality, which prevents him from finding anything perfect enough

to be venerated.' Of course I put my ears down and wagged my tail at that stroking."

"Yes, yes; I have had my own head explored with somewhat similar results. It is, I fear, but a vain show of fulfilling the heathen precept, 'Know thyself,' and too often leads to a self-estimate which will subsist in the absence of that fruit by which alone the quality of the tree is made evident. Nevertheless — Esther, my dear, this is Mr. Holt, whose acquaintance I have even now been making with more than ordinary interest. He will take tea with us."

Esther bowed slightly as she walked across the room to fetch the candle and place it near her tray. Felix rose and bowed, also with an air of indifference, which was perhaps exaggerated by the fact that he was inwardly surprised. The minister's daughter was not the sort of person he expected. She was quite incongruous with his notion of ministers' daughters in general; and though he had expected something nowise delightful, the incongruity repelled him. A very delicate scent, the faint suggestion of a garden, was wafted as she went. He would not observe her, but he had a sense of an elastic walk, the tread of small feet, a long neck and a high crown of shining brown plaits with curls that floated backward — things, in short, that suggested a fine lady to him, and determined him to notice her as little as possible. A fine lady was always a sort of spun glass affair — not natural, and with no beauty for him as art; but a fine lady as the daughter of this rusty old Puritan was especially offensive.

"Nevertheless," continued Mr. Lyon, who rarely let drop any thread of discourse, "that phrenological science is not irreconcilable with the revealed dispensations. And it is undeniable that we have our varying native dispositions which even grace will not obliterate. I myself, from my youth up, have been given to question too curiously concerning the truth — to examine and sift the medicine of the soul rather than to apply it."

"If your truth happens to be such medicine as Holt's Pills and Elixir, the less you swallow of it the better," said Felix. "But truth-venders and medicine-venders usually recommend swallowing. When a man sees his livelihood in a pill or a proposition, he likes to have orders for the dose, and not curious inquiries."

This speech verged on rudeness, but it was delivered with a brusque openness that implied the absence of any personal intention. The minister's daughter was now for the first

time startled into looking at Felix. But her survey of this unusual speaker was soon made, and she relieved her father from the need to reply by saying, —

"The tea is poured out, father."

That was the signal for Mr. Lyon to advance towards the table, raise his right hand, and ask a blessing at sufficient length for Esther to glance at the visitor again. There seemed to be no danger of his looking at her: he was observing her father. She had time to remark that he was a peculiar-looking person, but not insignificant, which was the quality that most hopelessly consigned a man to perdition. He was massively built. The striking points in his face were large clear gray eyes and full lips.

"Will you draw up to the table, Mr. Holt?" said the minister.

In the act of rising, Felix pushed back his chair too suddenly against the rickety table close by him, and down went the blue-frilled work-basket, flying open, and dispersing on the floor reels, thimble, muslin-work, a small sealed bottle of attar of rose, and something heavier than these — a duodecimo volume which fell close to him between the table and the fender.

"Oh my stars!" said Felix, "I beg your pardon." Esther had already started up, and with wonderful quickness had picked up half the small rolling things while Felix was lifting the basket and the book. This last had opened, and had its leaves crushed in falling; and, with the instinct of a bookish man, he saw nothing more pressing to be done than to flatten the corners of the leaves.

"Byron's Poems!" he said, in a tone of disgust, while Esther was recovering all the other articles. "'The Dream' — he'd better have been asleep and snoring. What! do you stuff your memory with Byron, Miss Lyon?"

Felix, on his side, was led at last to look straight at Esther, but it was with a strong denunciatory and pedagogic intention. Of course he saw more clearly than ever that she was a fine lady.

She reddened, drew up her long neck, and said, as she retreated to her chair again, —

"I have a great admiration for Byron."

Mr. Lyon had paused in the act of drawing his chair to the tea-table, and was looking on at this scene, wrinkling the corners of his eyes with a perplexed smile. Esther would not have wished him to know anything about the volume of Byron, but she was too proud to show any concern.

"He is a worldly and vain writer, I fear," said Mr. Lyon. He knew scarcely anything of the poet, whose books embodied the faith and ritual of many young ladies and gentlemen.

"A misanthropic debauchee," said Felix, lifting a chair with one hand, and holding the book open in the other, "whose notion of a hero was that he should disorder his stomach and despise mankind. His corsairs and renegades, his Alps and Manfreds, are the most paltry puppets that were ever pulled by the strings of lust and pride."

"Hand the book to me," said Mr. Lyon.

"Let me beg of you to put it aside till after tea, father" said Esther. "However objectionable Mr. Holt may find its pages, they would certainly be made worse by being greased with bread-and-butter."

"That is true, my dear," said Mr. Lyon, laying down the book on the small table behind him. He saw that his daughter was angry.

"Ho, ho!" thought Felix, "her father is frightened at her. How came he to have such a nice-stepping, long-necked peacock for his daughter? but she shall see that I am not frightened." Then he said aloud, "I should like to know how you will justify your admiration for such a writer, Miss Lyon."

"I should not attempt it with you, Mr. Holt," said Esther. "You have such strong words at command, that they make the smallest argument seem formidable. If I had ever met the giant Cormoran, I should have made a point of agreeing with him in his literary opinions."

Esther had that excellent thing in woman, a soft voice with a clear fluent utterance. Her sauciness was always charming because it was without emphasis, and was accompanied with graceful little turns of the head.

Felix laughed at her thrust with young heartiness.

"My daughter is a critic of words, Mr. Holt," said the minister, smiling complacently, "and often corrects mine on the ground of niceties, which I profess are as dark to me as if they were the reports of a sixth sense which I possess not. I am an eager seeker for precision, and would fain find language subtle enough to follow the utmost intricacies of the soul's pathways, but I see not why a round word that means some object, made and blessed by the Creator, should be branded and banished as a malefactor."

"Oh, your niceties — I know what they are," said Felix, in his usual *fortissimo*. "They all go on your system of make-

believe. 'Rottenness' may suggest what is unpleasant, so you'd better say 'sugar-plums,' or something else such a long way off the fact that nobody is obliged to think of it. Those are your roundabout euphuisms that dress up swindling till it looks as well as honesty, and shoot with boiled pease instead of bullets. I hate your gentlemanly speakers."

"Then you would not like Mr. Jermyn, I think," said Esther. "That reminds me, father, that to-day, when I was giving Miss Louisa Jermyn her lesson, Mr. Jermyn came in and spoke to me with grand politeness, and asked me at what times you were likely to be disengaged, because he wished to make your better acquaintance, and consult you on matters of importance. He never took the least notice of me before. Can you guess the reason of his sudden ceremoniousness?"

"Nay, child," said the minister, ponderingly.

"Politics, of course," said Felix. "He's on some committee. An election is coming. Universal peace is declared, and the foxes have a sincere interest in prolonging the lives of the poultry. Eh, Mr. Lyon? Isn't that it?"

"Nay, not so. He is the close ally of the Transome family, who are blind hereditary Tories like the Debarrys, and will drive their tenants to the poll as if they were sheep. And it has even been hinted that the heir who is coming from the East may be another Tory candidate, and coalesce with the younger Debarry. It is said that he has enormous wealth, and could purchase every vote in the county that has a price."

"He is come," said Esther. "I heard Miss Jermyn tell her sister that she had seen him going out of her father's room."

"'Tis strange," said Mr. Lyon.

"Something extraordinary must have happened," said Esther, "for Mr. Jermyn to intend courting us. Miss Jermyn said to me only the other day that she could not think how I came to be so well educated and ladylike. She always thought Dissenters were ignorant, vulgar people. I said, So they were, usually, and Church people also in small towns. She considers herself a judge of what is ladylike, and she is vulgarity personified — with large feet, and the most odious scent on her handkerchief, and a bonnet that looks like 'The Fashion' printed in capital letters."

"One sort of fine ladyism is as good as another," said Felix.

"No, indeed. Pardon me," said Esther. "A real fine lady does not wear clothes that flare in people's eyes, or use impor-

tunate scents, or make a noise as she moves: she is something refined and graceful, and charming, and never obtrusive."

"Oh yes," said Felix, contemptuously. "And she reads Byron also, and admires Childe Harold—gentlemen of unspeakable woes, who employ a hairdresser, and look seriously at themselves in the glass."

Esther reddened, and gave a little toss. Felix went on triumphantly. "A fine lady is a squirrel-headed thing, with small airs, and small notions, about as applicable to the business of life as a pair of tweezers to the clearing of a forest. Ask your father what those old persecuted emigrant Puritans would have done with fine-lady wives and daughters."

"Oh, there is no danger of such misalliances," said Esther. "Men who are unpleasant companions and make frights of themselves, are sure to get wives tasteless enough to suit them."

"Esther, my dear," said Mr. Lyon, "let not your playfulness betray you into disrespect towards those venerable pilgrims. They struggled and endured in order to cherish and plant anew the seeds of scriptural doctrine and of a pure discipline."

"Yes, I know," said Esther, hastily, dreading a discourse on the pilgrim fathers.

"Oh, they were an ugly lot!" Felix burst in, making Mr. Lyon start. "Miss Medora wouldn't have minded if they had all been put into the pillory and lost their ears. She would have said, 'Their ears did stick out so.' I shouldn't wonder if that's a bust of one of them." Here Felix, with sudden keenness of observation, nodded at the black bust with the gauze over its colored face.

"No," said Mr. Lyon; "that is the eminent George Whitefield, who, you well know, had a gift of oratory as of one on whom the tongue of flame had rested visibly. But Providence—doubtless for wise ends in relation to the inner man, for I would not inquire too closely into minutiae which carry too many plausible interpretations for any one of them to be stable—Providence, I say, ordained that the good man should squint; and my daughter has not yet learned to bear with his infirmity."

"So she has put a veil over it. Suppose you had squinted yourself?" said Felix, looking at Esther.

"Then, doubtless, you could have been more polite to me, Mr. Holt," said Esther, rising and placing herself at her work-table. "You seem to prefer what is unusual and ugly."

"A peacock!" thought Felix. "I should like to come and

scold her every day, and make her cry and cut her fine hair off."

Felix rose to go, and said, "I will not take up more of your valuable time, Mr. Lyon. I know that you have not many spare evenings."

"That is true, my young friend; for I now go to Sproxton one evening in the week. I do not despair that we may some day need a chapel there, though the hearers do not multiply save among the women, and there is no work as yet begun among the miners themselves. I shall be glad of your company in my walk thither to-morrow at five o'clock, if you would like to see how that population has grown of late years."

"Oh, I've been to Sproxton already several times. I had a congregation of my own there last Sunday evening."

"What! do you preach?" said Mr. Lyon, with a brightened glance.

"Not exactly. I went to the ale-house."

Mr. Lyon started. I trust you are putting a riddle to me, young man, even as Samson did to his companions. From what you said but lately, it cannot be that you are given to tippling and to taverns."

"Oh, I don't drink much. I order a pint of beer, and I get into talk with the fellows over their pots and pipes. Somebody must take a little knowledge and common-sense to them in this way, else how are they to get it? I go for educating the non-electors, so I put myself in the way of my pupils—my academy is the beer-house. I'll walk with you to-morrow with great pleasure."

"Do so, do so," said Mr. Lyon, shaking hands with his old acquaintance. "We shall understand each other better by and by, I doubt not."

"I wish you good-evening, Miss Lyon."

Esther bowed very slightly, without speaking.

"That is a singular young man, Esther," said the minister, walking about after Felix was gone. "I discern in him a love for whatsoever things are honest and true, which I would fain believe to be an earnest of further endowment with the wisdom that is from on high. It is true that, as the traveller in the desert is often lured, by a false vision of water and freshness, to turn aside from the track which leads to the tried and established fountains, so the Evil One will take advantage of a natural yearning towards the better, to delude the soul with a self-flattering belief in a visionary virtue, higher than the ordinary fruits of the Spirit. But I trust it is not so here. I

feel a great enlargement in this young man's presence, notwithstanding a certain license in his language, which I shall use my efforts to correct."

"I think he is very coarse and rude," said Esther, with a touch of temper in her voice. "But he speaks better English than most of our visitors. What is his occupation?"

"Watch and clock making, by which, together with a little teaching, as I understand, he hopes to maintain his mother, not thinking it right that she should live by the sale of medicines whose virtues he distrusts. It is no common scruple."

"Dear me," said Esther, "I thought he was something higher than that." She was disappointed.

Felix, on his side, as he strolled out in the evening air, said to himself: "Now by what fine meshes of circumstance did that queer devout old man, with his awful creed, which makes this world a vestibule with double doors to hell, and a narrow stair on one side whereby the thinner sort may mount to heaven — by what subtle play of flesh and spirit did he come to have a daughter so little in his own likeness? Married foolishly, I suppose. I'll never marry, though I should have to live on raw turnips to subdue my flesh. I'll never look back and say, 'I had a fine purpose once — I meant to keep my hands clean and my soul upright, and to look truth in the face; but pray excuse me, I have a wife and children — I must lie and simper a little, else they'll starve;' or 'My wife is nice, she must have her bread well buttered, and her feelings will be hurt if she is not thought genteel.' That is the lot Miss Esther is preparing for some man or other. I could grind my teeth at such self-satisfied minxes, who think they can tell everybody what is the correct thing, and the utmost stretch of their ideas will not place them on a level with the intelligent fleas. I should like to see if she could be made ashamed of herself."

CHAPTER VI.

"Though she be dead, yet let me think she lives,
And feed my mind, that dies for want of her."

MARLOWE: *Tamburlaine the Great.*

HARDLY any one in Treby who thought at all of Mr. Lyon and his daughter had not felt the same sort of wonder about Esther as Felix felt. She was not much liked by her father's church and congregation. The less serious observed that she

had too many airs and graces, and held her head much too high; the stricter sort feared greatly that Mr. Lyon had not been sufficiently careful in placing his daughter among God-fearing people, and that, being led astray by the melancholy vanity of giving her exceptional accomplishments, he had sent her to a French school, and allowed her to take situations where she had contracted notions not only above her own rank, but of too a worldly a kind to be safe in any rank. But no one knew what sort of a woman her mother had been, for Mr. Lyon never spoke of his past domesticities. When he was chosen as pastor at Treby in 1825, it was understood that he had been a widower many years, and he had no companion but the tearful and much-exercised Lyddy, his daughter being still at school. It was only two years ago that Esther had come home to live permanently with her father, and take pupils in the town. Within that time she had excited a passion in two young Dissenting breasts that were clad in the best style of Treby waistcoat—a garment which at that period displayed much design both in the stuff and the wearer; and she had secured an astonished admiration of her cleverness from the girls of various ages who were her pupils; indeed, her knowledge of French was generally held to give a distinction to Treby itself as compared with other market-towns. But she had won little regard of any other kind. Wise Dissenting matrons were divided between fear lest their sons should want to marry her and resentment that she should treat those “undeniable” young men with a distant scorn which was hardly to be tolerated in a minister’s daughter; not only because that parentage appeared to entail an obligation to show an exceptional degree of Christian humility, but because, looked at from a secular point of view, a poor Minister must be below the substantial householders who kept him. For at that time the preacher who was paid under the Voluntary system was regarded by his flock with feelings not less mixed than the spiritual person who still took his tithe-pig or his *modus*. His gifts were admired, and tears were shed under best bonnets at his sermons; but the weaker tea was thought good enough for him; and even when he went to preach a charity sermon in a strange town, he was treated with home-made wine and the smaller bedroom. As the good Churchman’s reverence was often mixed with growling, and was apt to be given chiefly to an abstract parson who was what a parson ought to be, so the good Dissenter sometimes mixed his approval of ministerial gifts with considerable criticism and cheapening of the

human vessel which contained those treasures. Mrs. Muscat and Mrs. Nuttwood applied the principle of Christian equality by remarking that Mr. Lyon had his oddities, and that he ought not to allow his daughter to indulge in such unbecoming expenditure on her gloves, shoes, and hosiery, even if she did pay for them out of her earnings. As for the Church people who engaged Miss Lyon to give lessons in their families, their imaginations were altogether prostrated by the incongruity between accomplishments and Dissent, between weekly prayer-meetings, and a conversance with so lively and altogether worldly a language as the French. Esther's own mind was not free from a sense of irreconcilableness between the objects of her taste and the conditions of her lot. She knew that Dissenters were looked down upon by those whom she regarded as the most refined classes; her favorite companions, both in France and at an English school where she had been a junior teacher, had thought it quite ridiculous to have a father who was a Dissenting preacher; and when an ardently admiring school-fellow induced her parents to take Esther as a governess to the younger children, all her native tendencies towards luxury, fastidiousness, and scorn of mock gentility, were strengthened by witnessing the habits of a well-born and wealthy family. Yet the position of servitude was irksome to her, and she was glad at last to live at home with her father; for though, throughout her girlhood, she had wished to avoid this lot, a little experience had taught her to prefer its comparative independence. But she was not contented with her life: she seemed to herself to be surrounded with ignoble, uninteresting conditions, from which there was no issue; for even if she had been unamiable enough to give her father pain deliberately, it would have been no satisfaction to her to go to Treby Church, and visibly turn her back on Dissent. It was not religious differences, but social differences, that Esther was concerned about, and her ambitious taste would have been no more gratified in the society of the Waces than in that of the Muscats. The Waces spoke imperfect English and played whist; the Muscats spoke the same dialect and took in the 'Evangelical Magazine.' Esther liked neither of these amusements. She had one of those exceptional organizations which are quick and sensitive without being in the least morbid; she was alive to the finest shades of manner, to the nicest distinctions of tone and accent; she had a little code of her own about scents and colors, textures and behavior, by which she secretly condemned or sanctioned

all things and persons. And she was well satisfied with herself for her fastidious taste, never doubting that hers was the highest standard. She was proud that the best-born and handsomest girls at school had always said that she might be taken for a born lady. Her own pretty instep, clad in a silk stocking, her little heel, just rising from a kid slipper, her irreproachable nails and delicate wrist, were the objects of delighted consciousness to her; and she felt that it was her superiority which made her unable to use without disgust any but the finest cambric handkerchiefs and freshest gloves. Her money all went in the gratification of these nice tastes, and she saved nothing from her earnings. I cannot say that she had any pangs of conscience on this score; for she felt sure that she was generous: she hated all meanness, would empty her purse impulsively on some sudden appeal to her pity, and if she found out that her father had a want, she would supply it with some pretty device of a surprise. But then the good man so seldom had a want—except the perpetual desire, which she could never gratify, of seeing her under convictions, and fit to become a member of the church.

As for little Mr. Lyon, he loved and admired this unregenerate child more, he feared, than was consistent with the due preponderance of impersonal and ministerial regards: he prayed and pleaded for her with tears, humbling himself for her spiritual deficiencies in the privacy of his study; and then came down-stairs to find himself in timorous subjection to her wishes, lest, as he inwardly said, he should give his teaching an ill savor, by mingling it with outward crossing. There will be queens in spite of Salic or other laws of later date than Adam and Eve; and here, in this small dingy house of the minister in Malthouse Yard, there was a light-footed, sweet-voiced Queen Esther.

The stronger will always rule, say some, with an air of confidence which is like a lawyer's flourish, forbidding exceptions or additions. But what is strength? Is it blind wilfulness that sees no terrors, no many-linked consequences, no bruises and wounds of those whose cords it tightens? Is it the narrowness of a brain that conceives no needs differing from its own, and looks to no results beyond the bargains of to-day; that tugs with emphasis for every small purpose, and thinks it weakness to exercise the sublime power of resolved renunciation? There is a sort of subjection which is the peculiar heritage of largeness and of love; and strength is often only another name for willing bondage to irremediable weakness.

Esther had affection for her father: she recognized the purity of his character, and a quickness of intellect in him which responded to her own liveliness, in spite of what seemed a dreary piety, which selected everything that was least interesting and romantic in life and history. But his old clothes had a smoky odor, and she did not like to walk with him, because, when people spoke to him in the street, it was his wont, instead of remarking on the weather and passing on, to pour forth in an absent manner some reflections that were occupying his mind about the traces of the Divine government, or about a peculiar incident narrated in the life of the eminent Mr. Richard Baxter. Esther had a horror of appearing ridiculous even in the eyes of vulgar Trebians. She fancied that she should have loved her mother better than she was able to love her father; and she wished she could have remembered that mother more thoroughly.

But she had no more than a broken vision of the time before she was five years old — the time when the word oftenest on her lips was “Mamma;” when a low voice spoke caressing French words to her, and she in her turn repeated the words to her rag-doll; when a very small white hand, different from any that came after, used to pat her, and stroke her, and tie on her frock and pinafore, and when at last there was nothing but sitting with a doll on a bed where mamma was lying, till her father once carried her away. Where distinct memory began, there was no longer the low caressing voice and the small white hand. She knew that her mother was a French-woman, that she had been in want and distress, and that her maiden name was Annette Ledru. Her father had told her no more than this; and once, in her childhood, when she had asked him some question, he had said, “My Esther, until you are a woman, we will only think of your mother: when you are about to be married and leave me, we will speak of her, and I will deliver to you her ring and all that was hers; but, without a great command laid upon me, I cannot pierce my heart by speaking of that which was and is not.” Esther had never forgotten these words, and the older she became, the more impossible she felt it that she should urge her father with questions about the past.

His inability to speak of that past to her depended on manifold causes. Partly it came from an initial concealment. He had not the courage to tell Esther that he was not really her father: he had not the courage to renounce that hold on her tenderness which the belief in his natural fatherhood

must help to give him, or to incur any resentment that her quick spirit might feel at having been brought up under a false supposition. But there were other things yet more difficult for him to be quite open about — deep sorrows of his life as a Christian minister that were hardly to be told to a girl.

Twenty-two years before, when Rufus Lyon was no more than thirty-six years old, he was the admired pastor of a large Independent congregation in one of our southern seaport towns. He was unmarried, and had met all exhortations of friends who represented to him that a bishop — i.e., the overseer of an Independent church and congregation — should be the husband of one wife, by saying that St. Paul meant this particular as a limitation, and not as an injunction; that a minister was permitted to have one wife, but that he, Rufus Lyon, did not wish to avail himself of that permission, finding his studies and other labors of his vocation all-absorbing, and seeing that mothers in Israel were sufficiently provided by those who had not been set apart for a more special work. His church and congregation were proud of him: he was put forward on platforms, was made a "deputation," and was requested to preach anniversary sermons in far-off towns. Wherever noteworthy preachers were discussed, Rufus Lyon was almost sure to be mentioned as one who did honor to the Independent body; his sermons were said to be full of study yet full of fire; and while he had more of human knowledge than many of his brethren, he showed in an eminent degree the marks of a true ministerial vocation. But on a sudden this burning and shining light seemed to be quenched: Mr. Lyon voluntarily resigned his charge and withdrew from the town.

A terrible crisis had come upon him; a moment in which religious doubt and newly-awakened passion had rushed together in a common flood, and had paralyzed his ministerial gifts. His life of thirty-six years had been a story of purely religious and studious fervor; his passion had been for doctrines, for argumentative conquest on the side of right; the sins he had had chiefly to pray against had been those of personal ambition (under such forms as ambition takes in the mind of a man who has chosen the career of an Independent preacher), and those of a too restless intellect, ceaselessly urging questions concerning the mystery of that which was assuredly revealed, and thus hindering the due nourishment of the soul on the substance of the truth delivered. Even at that time of comparative youth, his unworldliness and sim-

plicity in small matters (for he was keenly awake to the larger affairs of this world) gave a certain oddity to his manners and appearance; and though his sensitive face had much beauty, his person altogether seemed so irrelevant to a fashionable view of things, that well-dressed ladies and gentlemen usually laughed at him, as they probably did at Mr. John Milton after the Restoration and ribbons had come in, and still more at that apostle, of weak bodily presence, who preached in the back streets of Ephesus and elsewhere, a new view of a new religion that hardly anybody believed in. Rufus Lyon was the singular-looking apostle of the Meeting in Skipper's Lane. Was it likely that any romance should befall such a man? Perhaps not; but romance did befall him.

One winter's evening in 1812, Mr. Lyon was returning from a village preaching. He walked at his usual rapid rate, with busy thoughts undistracted by any sight more distinct than the bushes and hedgerow trees, black beneath a faint moonlight, until something suggested to him that he had perhaps omitted to bring away with him a thin account-book in which he recorded certain subscriptions. He paused, unfastened his outer coat and felt in all his pockets, then he took off his hat and looked inside it. The book was not to be found, and he was about to walk on, when he was startled by hearing a low, sweet voice say, with a strong foreign accent, —

"Have pity on me, sir."

Searching with his short-sighted eyes, he perceived some one on a side-bank; and approaching, he found a young woman with a baby on her lap. She spoke again more faintly than before.

"Sir, I die with hunger; in the name of God take the little one."

There was no distrusting the pale face and the sweet low voice. Without pause, Mr. Lyon took the baby in his arms and said, "Can you walk by my side, young woman?"

She rose, but seemed tottering. "Lean on me," said Mr. Lyon. And so they walked slowly on, the minister for the first time in his life carrying a baby.

Nothing better occurred to him than to take his charge to his own house; it was the simplest way of relieving the woman's wants, and finding out how she could be helped further; and he thought of no other possibilities. She was too feeble for more words to be spoken between them till she was seated by his fireside. His elderly servant was not easily

amazed at anything her master did in the way of charity, and at once took the baby, while Mr. Lyon unfastened the mother's damp bonnet and shawl, and gave her something warm to drink. Then, waiting by her till it was time to offer her more, he had nothing to do but to notice the loveliness of her face, which seemed to him as that of an angel, with a benignity in its repose that carried a more assured sweetness than any smile. Gradually she revived, lifted up her delicate hands between her face and the firelight, and looked at the baby which lay opposite to her on the old servant's lap, taking in spoonfuls with much content, and stretching out naked feet towards the warmth. Then, as her consciousness of relief grew into contrasting memory, she lifted up her eyes to Mr. Lyon, who stood close by her, and said, in her pretty broken way, —

"I knew you had a good heart when you took your hat off. You seemed to me as the image of the *bien-aimé Saint Jean*."

The grateful glance of those blue-gray eyes, with their long shadow-making eyelashes, was a new kind of good to Rufus Lyon; it seemed to him as if a woman had never really looked at him before. Yet this poor thing was apparently a blind French Catholic — of delicate nurture, surely, judging from her hands. He was in a tremor; he felt that it would be rude to question her, and he only urged her now to take a little food. She accepted it with evident enjoyment, looking at the child continually, and then, with a fresh burst of gratitude, leaning forward to press the servant's hand, and say, "Oh, you are good!" Then she looked up at Mr. Lyon again and said, "Is there in the world a prettier *marmot*?"

The evening passed; a bed was made up for the strange woman, and Mr. Lyon had not asked her so much as her name. He never went to bed himself that night. He spent it in misery, enduring a horrible assault of Satan. He thought a frenzy had seized him. Wild visions of an impossible future thrust themselves upon him. He dreaded lest the woman had a husband; he wished that he might call her his own, that he might worship her beauty, that she might love and caress him. And what to the mass of men would have been only one of many allowable follies — a transient fascination, to be dispelled by daylight and contact with those common facts of which common-sense is the reflex — was to him a spiritual convulsion. He was as one who raved, and knew that he raved. These mad wishes were irreconcilable with what he was, and must be, as a Christian minister; nay, penetrating

his soul as tropic heat penetrates the frame, and changes for it all aspects and all flavors. they were irreconcilable with that conception of the world which made his faith. All the busy doubt which had before been mere impish shadows flitting around a belief that was strong with the strength of an unswerving moral bias, had now gathered blood and substance. The questioning spirit had become suddenly bold and blasphemous: it no longer insinuated scepticism—it prompted defiance; it no longer expressed cool inquisitive thought, but was the voice of a passionate mood. Yet he never ceased to regard it as the voice of the tempter: the conviction which had been the law of his better life remained within him as a conscience.

The struggle of that night was an abridgment of all the struggles that came after. Quick souls have their intensest life in the first anticipatory sketch of what may or will be, and the pursuit of their wish is the pursuit of that paradisiacal vision which only impelled them, and is left farther and farther behind, vanishing forever even out of hope in the moment which is called success.

The next morning Mr. Lyon heard his guest's history. She was the daughter of a French officer of considerable rank, who had fallen in the Russian campaign. She had escaped from France to England with much difficulty in order to rejoin her husband, a young Englishman, to whom she had become attached during his detention as a prisoner of war on parole at Vesoul, where she was living under the charge of some relatives, and to whom she had been married without the consent of her family. Her husband had served in the Hanoverian army, had obtained his discharge in order to visit England on some business, with the nature of which she was not acquainted, and had been taken prisoner as a suspected spy. A short time after their marriage he and his fellow-prisoners had been moved to a town nearer the coast, and she had remained in wretched uncertainty about him, until at last a letter had come from him telling her that an exchange of prisoners had occurred, that he was in England, that she must use her utmost effort to follow him, and that on arriving on English ground she must send him word under a cover which he enclosed, bearing an address in London. Fearing the opposition of her friends, she started unknown to them, with a very small supply of money; and after enduring much discomfort and many fears in waiting for a passage, which she at last got in a small trading smack, she arrived at South

ampton—ill. Before she was able to write, her baby was born; and before her husband's answer came, she had been obliged to pawn some clothes and trinkets. He desired her to travel to London where he would meet her at the Belle Sauvage, adding that he was himself in distress, and unable to come to her: when once she was in London they would take ship and quit the country. Arrived at the Belle Sauvage, the poor thing waited three days in vain for her husband: on the fourth a letter came in a strange hand, saying that in his last moments he had desired this letter to be written to inform her of his death, and recommend her to return to her friends. She could choose no other course, but she had soon been reduced to walking, that she might save her pence to buy bread with; and on the evening when she made her appeal to Mr. Lyon, she had pawned the last thing, over and above needful clothing, that she could persuade herself to part with. The things she had not borne to part with were her marriage-ring, and a locket containing her husband's hair, and bearing his baptismal name. This locket, she said, exactly resembled one worn by her husband on his watch-chain, only that his bore the name Annette, and contained a lock of her hair. The precious trifle now hung round her neck by a cord, for she had sold the small gold chain which formerly held it.

The only guaranty of this story, besides the exquisite candor of her face, was a small packet of papers which she carried in her pocket, consisting of her husband's few letters, the letter which announced his death, and her marriage certificate. It was not so probable a story as that of many an inventive vagrant; but Mr. Lyon did not doubt it for a moment. It was impossible to him to suspect this angelic-faced woman, but he had strong suspicions concerning her husband. He could not help being glad that she had not retained the address he had desired her to send to in London, as that removed any obvious means of learning particulars about him. But inquiries might have been made at Vesoul by letter, and her friends there might have been appealed to. A consciousness, not to be quite silenced, told Mr. Lyon that this was the course he ought to take, but it would have required an energetic self-conquest, and he was excused from it by Annette's own disinclination to return to her relatives, if any other acceptable possibility could be found.

He dreaded, with a violence of feeling which surmounted all struggles, lest anything should take her away, and place

such barriers between them as would make it unlikely or impossible that she should ever love him well enough to become his wife. Yet he saw with perfect clearness that unless he tore up this mad passion by the roots, his ministerial usefulness would be frustrated, and the repose of his soul would be destroyed. This woman was an unregenerate Catholic; ten minutes' listening to her artless talk made that plain to him: even if her position had been less equivocal, to unite himself to such a woman was nothing less than a spiritual fall. It was already a fall that he had wished there was no high purpose to which he owed an allegiance — that he had longed to fly to some backwoods where there was no church to reproach him, and where he might have this sweet woman to wife, and know the joys of tenderness. Those sensibilities which in most lives are diffused equally through the youthful years, were aroused suddenly in Mr. Lyon, as some men have their special genius revealed to them by a tardy concurrence of conditions. His love was the first love of a fresh young heart full of wonder and worship. But what to one man is the virtue which he has sunk below the possibility of aspiring to, is to another the backsliding by which he forfeits his spiritual crown.

The end was, that Annette remained in his house. He had striven against himself so far as to represent her position to some chief matrons in his congregation, praying and yet dreading that they would so take her by the hand as to impose on him that denial of his own longing not to let her go out of his sight, which he found it too hard to impose on himself. But they regarded the case coldly: the woman was, after all, a vagrant. Mr. Lyon was observed to be surprisingly weak on the subject — his eagerness seemed disproportionate and unbecoming; and this young Frenchwoman, unable to express herself very clearly, was no more interesting to those matrons and their husbands than other pretty young women suspiciously circumstanced. They were willing to subscribe something to carry her on her way, or if she took some lodgings they would give her a little sewing, and endeavor to convert her from Papistry. If, however, she was a respectable person, as she said, the only proper thing for her was to go back to her own country and friends. In spite of himself, Mr. Lyon exulted. There seemed a reason now that he should keep Annette under his own eyes. He told himself that no real object would be served by his providing food and lodging for her elsewhere — an expense which he could ill afford. And she was apparently so helpless,

except as to the one task of attending to her baby, that it would have been folly to think of her exerting herself for her own support.

But this course of his was severely disapproved by his church. There were various signs that the minister was under some evil influence: his preaching wanted its old fervor, he seemed to shun the intercourse of his brethren, and very mournful suspicions were entertained. A formal remonstrance was presented to him, but he met it as if he had already determined to act in anticipation of it. He admitted that external circumstances, conjoined with a peculiar state of mind, were likely to hinder the fruitful exercise of his ministry, and he resigned it. There was much sorrowing, much expostulation, but he declared that for the present he was unable to unfold himself more fully; he only wished to state solemnly that Annette Ledru, though blind in spiritual things, was in a worldly sense a pure and virtuous woman. No more was to be said, and he departed to a distant town. Here he maintained himself, Annette, and the child, with the remainder of his stipend, and with the wages he earned as a printer's reader. Annette was one of those angelic-faced helpless women who take all things as manna from heaven: the good image of the well-beloved Saint John wished her to stay with him, and there was nothing else that she wished for except the unattainable. Yet for a whole year Mr. Lyon never dared to tell Annette that he loved her: he trembled before this woman; he saw that the idea of his being her lover was too remote from her mind for her to have any idea that she ought not to live with him. She had never known, never asked the reason why he gave up his ministry. She seemed to entertain as little concern about the strange world in which she lived as a bird in its nest; an avalanche had fallen over the past, but she sat warm and uncrushed — there was food for many morrows, and her baby flourished. She did not seem even to care about a priest, or about having her child baptized; and on the subject of religion Mr. Lyon was as timid, and shrank as much from speaking to her, as on the subject of his love. He dreaded anything that might cause her to feel a sudden repulsion towards him. He dreaded disturbing her simple gratitude and content. In these days his religious faith was not slumbering; it was awake and achingly conscious of having fallen in a struggle. He had had a great treasure committed to him, and had flung it away: he held himself a backslider. His unbelieving thoughts never gained the full ear and consent of his

soul. His prayers had been stifled by the sense that there was something he preferred to complete obedience: they had ceased to be anything but intermittent cries and confessions, and a submissive presentiment, rising at times even to an entreaty, that some great discipline might come, that the dulled spiritual sense might be roused to full vision and hearing as of old, and the supreme facts become again supreme in his soul. Mr. Lyon will perhaps seem a very simple personage, with pitifully narrow theories; but none of our theories are quite large enough for all the disclosures of time, and to the end of men's struggles a penalty will remain for those who sink from the ranks of the heroes into the crowd for whom the heroes fight and die.

One day, however, Annette learned Mr. Lyon's secret. The baby had a tooth coming, and being large and strong now, was noisily fretful. Mr. Lyon, though he had been working extra hours and was much in need of repose, took the child from its mother immediately on entering the house and walked about with it, patting and talking soothingly to it. The stronger grasp, the new sensations, were a successful anodyne, and baby went to sleep on his shoulder. But fearful lest any movement should disturb it, he sat down, and endured the bondage of holding it still against his shoulder.

"You do nurse baby well," said Annette, approvingly. "Yet you never nursed before I came?"

"No," said Mr. Lyon. "I had no brothers and sisters."

"Why were you not married?" Annette had never thought of asking that question before.

"Because I never loved any woman — till now. I thought I should never marry. Now I wish to marry."

Annette started. She did not see at once that she was the woman he wanted to marry; what had flashed on her mind was, that there might be a great change in Mr. Lyon's life. It was as if the lightning had entered into her dream and half awaked her.

"Do you think it foolish, Annette, that I should wish to marry?"

"I did not expect it," she said, doubtfully. "I did not know you thought about it."

"You know the woman I should like to marry?"

"I know her?" she said, interrogatively, blushing deeply.

"It is you, Annette — you whom I have loved better than my duty. I forsook everything for you."

Mr. Lyon paused: he was about to do what he felt would be ignoble — to urge what seemed like a claim

"Can you love me, Annette? Will you be my wife?" Annette trembled and looked miserable.

"Do not speak — forget it," said Mr. Lyon, rising suddenly and speaking with loud energy. "No, no — I do not want it — I do not wish it."

The baby awoke as he started up; he gave the child into Annette's arms, and left her.

His work took him away early the next morning and the next again. They did not need to speak much to each other. The third day Mr. Lyon was too ill to go to work. His frame had been overwrought; he had been too poor to have sufficiently nourishing food, and under the shattering of his long-deferred hope his health had given way. They had no regular servant — only occasional help from an old woman, who lit the fires and put on the kettles. Annette was forced to be the sick-nurse, and this sudden demand on her shook away some of her torpor. The illness was a serious one, and the medical man one day hearing Mr. Lyon in his delirium raving with an astonishing fluency in Biblical language, suddenly looked round with increased curiosity at Annette, and asked if she were the sick man's wife, or some other relative.

"No — no relation," said Annette, shaking her head. "He has been good to me."

"How long have you lived with him?"

"More than a year."

"Was he a preacher once?"

"Yes."

"When did he leave off being a preacher?"

"Soon after he took care of me."

"Is that his child?"

"Sir," said Annette, coloring indignantly, "I am a widow."

The doctor, she thought, looked at her oddly, but he asked no more questions.

When the sick man was getting better, and able to enjoy invalid's food, he observed one day, while he was taking some broth, that Annette was looking at him; he paused to look at her in return, and was struck with a new expression in her face, quite distinct from the merely passive sweetness which usually characterized it. She laid her little hand on his, which was now transparently thin, and said, "I am getting very wise; I have sold some of the books to make money — the doctor told me where; and I have looked into the shops where they sell caps and bonnets and pretty things, and I can do all that, and get more money to keep us. And when you

are well enough to get up, we will go out and be married — shall we not? See! and *la petite*” (the baby had never been named anything else) “shall call you Papa — and then we shall never part.”

Mr. Lyon trembled. This illness — something else, perhaps — had made a great change in Annette. A fortnight after that they were married. The day before, he had ventured to ask her if she felt any difficulty about her religion, and if she would consent to have *la petite* baptized and brought up as a Protestant. She shook her head and said very simply, —

“No: in France, in other days, I would have minded; but all is changed. I never was fond of religion, but I knew it was right. *J’aimais les fleurs, les bals, la musique, et mon mari qui était beau.* But all that is gone away. There is nothing of my religion in this country. But the good God must be here, for you are good; I leave all to you.”

It was clear that Annette regarded her present life as a sort of death to the world — an existence on a remote island where she had been saved from wreck. She was too indolent mentally, too little interested, to acquaint herself with any secrets of the isle. The transient energy, the more vivid consciousness and sympathy which had been stirred in her during Mr. Lyon’s illness, had soon subsided into the old apathy to everything except her child. She withered like a plant in strange air, and the three years of life that remained were but a slow and gentle death. Those three years were to Mr. Lyon a period of such self-suppression and life in another as few men know. Strange! that the passion for this woman, which he felt to have drawn him aside from the right as much as if he had broken the most solemn vows — for that only was right to him which he held the best and highest — the passion for a being who had no glimpse of his thoughts induced a more thorough renunciation than he had ever known in the time of his complete devotion to his ministerial career. He had no flattery now, either from himself or the world; he knew that he had fallen, and *his* world had forgotten him, or shook their heads at his memory. The only satisfaction he had was the satisfaction of his tenderness — which meant untiring work, untiring patience, untiring wakefulness even to the dumb signs of feeling in a creature whom he alone cared for.

The day of parting came, and he was left with little Esther as the one visible sign of that four years’ break in his life. A year afterwards he entered the ministry again, and lived with the utmost sparingness that Esther might be so educated

as to be able to get her own bread in case of his death. Her probable facility in acquiring French naturally suggested his sending her to a French school, which would give her a special advantage as a teacher. It was a Protestant school, and French Protestantism had the high recommendation of being non-Prelatical. It was understood that Esther would contract no Papistical superstitions; and this was perfectly true; but she contracted, as we see, a good deal of non-Papistical vanity.

Mr. Lyon's reputation as a preacher and devoted pastor had revived; but some dissatisfaction beginning to be felt by his congregation at a certain laxity detected by them in his views as to the limits of salvation, which he had in one sermon even hinted might extend to unconscious recipients of mercy, he had found it desirable seven years ago to quit this ten years' pastorate and accept a call from the less important church in Malthouse Yard, Treby Magna.

This was Rufus Lyon's history, at that time unknown in its fulness to any human being besides himself. We can perhaps guess what memories they were that relaxed the stringency of his doctrine on the point of salvation. In the deepest of all senses his heart said, —

" Though she be dead, yet let me think she lives,
And feed my mind, that dies for want of her."

CHAPTER VII.

M. It was but yesterday you spoke him well—
You've changed your mind so soon?

N. Not I — 'tis he
That, changing to my thought, has changed my mind.
No man puts rotten apples in his pouch
Because their upper side looked fair to him.
Constancy in mistake is constant folly.

THE news that the rich heir of the Transomes was actually come back, and had been seen at Treby, was carried to some one else who had more reasons for being interested in it than the Reverend Rufus Lyon was yet conscious of having. It was owing to this that at three o'clock, two days afterwards, a carriage and pair, with coachman and footman in crimson and drab, passed through the lodge-gates of Transome Court. Inside there was a hale good-natured-looking man of sixty,

whose hands rested on a knotted stick held between his knees; and a blue-eyed, well-featured lady, fat and middle-aged — a mountain of satin, lace, and exquisite muslin embroidery. They were not persons of highly remarkable appearance, but to most Trebians they seemed absolutely unique, and likely to be known anywhere. If you had looked down on them from the box of Sampson's coach, he would have said, after lifting his hat, "Sir Maximus and his lady — did you see?" thinking it needless to add the surname.

"We shall find her greatly elated, doubtless," Lady Debarry was saying. "She has been in the shade so long."

"Ah, poor thing!" said Sir Maximus. "A fine woman she was in her bloom. I remember the first county ball she attended we were all ready to fight for the sake of dancing with her. I always liked her from that time — I never swallowed the scandal about her myself."

"If we are to be intimate with her," said Lady Debarry, "I wish you would avoid making such allusions, Sir Maximus. I should not like Selina and Harriet to hear them."

"My dear, I should have forgotten all about the scandal, only you remind me of it sometimes," retorted the Baronet, smiling and taking out his snuff-box.

"These sudden turns of fortune are often dangerous to an excitable constitution," said Lady Debarry, not choosing to notice her husband's epigram. "Poor Lady Alicia Methurst got heart-disease from a sudden piece of luck — the death of her uncle, you know. If Mrs. Transome were wise she would go to town — she can afford it now — and consult Dr. Truncheon. I should say myself he would order her digitalis: I have often guessed exactly what a prescription would be. But it certainly was always one of her weak points to think that she understood medicine better than other people."

"She's a healthy woman enough, surely: see how upright she is, and she rides about like a girl of twenty."

"She is so thin that she makes me shudder."

"Pooh! she's slim and active: women are not bid for by the pound."

"Pray don't be so coarse."

Sir Maximus laughed and showed his good teeth, which made his laughter very becoming. The carriage stopped, and they were soon ushered into Mrs. Transome's sitting-room, where she was working at her worsted embroidery. A little daily embroidery had been a constant element in Mrs. Transome's life; that soothing occupation of taking stitches to

produce what neither she nor any one else wanted, was then the resource of many a well-born and unhappy woman.

She received much warm congratulation and pressure of her hand with perfect composure of manner; but she became paler than usual, and her hands turned quite cold. The Debarrys did not yet know what Harold's politics were.

"Well, our lucky youngster is come in the nick of time," said Sir Maximus: "if he'll stand, he and Philip can run in harness together and keep out both the Whigs."

"It is really quite a providential thing — his returning just now," said Lady Debarry. "I couldn't help thinking that something would occur to prevent Philip from having such a man as Peter Garstin for his colleague."

"I call my friend Harold a youngster," said Sir Maximus, "for, you know, I remember him only as he was when that portrait was taken."

"That is a long while ago," said Mrs. Transome. "My son is much altered, as you may imagine."

There was a confused sound of voices in the library while this talk was going on. Mrs. Transome chose to ignore that noise, but her face, from being pale, began to flush a little.

"Yes, yes, on the outside, I dare say. But he was a fine fellow — I always liked him. And if anybody had asked me what I should choose for the good of the county, I couldn't have thought of anything better than having a young Transome for a neighbor who will take an active part. The Transomes and the Debarrys were always on the right side together in old days. Of course he'll stand — he has made up his mind to it?"

The need for an answer to this embarrassing question was deferred by the increase of inarticulate sounds accompanied by a bark from the library, and the sudden appearance at the tapestry-hung doorway of old Mr. Transome with a cord round his waist, playing a very poor-paced horse for a black-maned little boy about three years old, who was urging him on with loud encouraging noises and occasional thumps from a stick which he wielded with some difficulty. The old man paused with a vague gentle smile at the doorway, while the Baronet got up to speak to him. Nimrod snuffed at his master's legs to ascertain that he was not hurt, and the little boy, finding something new to be looked at, let go the cord and came round in front of the company, dragging his stick, and standing at a safe war-dancing distance as he fixed his great black eyes on Lady Debarry.

"Dear me, what a splendid little boy, Mrs. Transome! why — it cannot be — can it be — that you have the happiness to be a grandmamma?"

"Yes; that is my son's little boy."

"Indeed!" said Lady Debarry, really amazed. "I never heard you speak of his marriage. He has brought you home a daughter-in law, then?"

"No," said Mrs. Transome, coldly; "she is dead."

"O — o — oh!" said Lady Debarry, in a tone ludicrously undecided between condolence, satisfaction, and general mistiness. "How very singular — I mean that we should not have heard of Mr. Harold's marriage. But he's a charming little fellow: come to me, you round-cheeked cherub."

The black eyes continued fixed as if by a sort of fascination on Lady Debarry's face, and her affable invitation was unheeded. At last, putting his head forward and pouting his lips, the cherub gave forth with marked intention the sounds, "Nan-o-oom," many times repeated: apparently they summed up his opinion of Lady Debarry, and may perhaps have meant "naughty old woman," but his speech was a broken lisping polyglot of hazardous interpretation. Then he turned to pull at the Blenheim spaniel, which, being old and peevish, gave a little snap.

"Go, go, Harry; let poor Puff alone — he'll bite you," said Mrs. Transome, stooping to release her aged pet.

Her words were too suggestive, for Harry immediately laid hold of her arm with his teeth, and bit with all his might. Happily the stuffs upon it were some protection, but the pain forced Mrs. Transome to give a low cry; and Sir Maximus, who had now turned to reseal himself, shook the little rascal off, whereupon he burst away and trotted into the library again.

"I fear you are hurt," said Lady Debarry, with sincere concern. "What a little savage! Do have your arm attended to, my dear — I recommend fomentation — don't think of me."

"Oh thank you, it is nothing," said Mrs. Transome, biting her lip and smiling alternately; "it will soon go off. The pleasures of being a grandmamma, you perceive. The child has taken a dislike to me; but he makes quite a new life for Mr. Transome; they were playfellows at once."

"Bless my heart!" said Sir Maximus, "it is odd to think of Harold having been a family man so long. I made up my mind he was a young bachelor. What an old stager I am, to

be sure! And whom has he married? I hope we shall soon have the pleasure of seeing Mrs. Harold Transome." Sir Maximus, occupied with old Mr. Transome, had not overheard the previous conversation on that subject.

"She is no longer living," Lady Debarry hastily interposed; "but now, my dear Sir Maximus, we must not hinder Mrs. Transome from attending to her arm. I am sure she is in pain. Don't say another word, my dear — we shall see you again — you and Mr. Harold will come and dine with us on Thursday — say yes, only yes. Sir Maximus is longing to see him; and Philip will be down."

"Yes, yes!" said Sir Maximus; "he must lose no time in making Philip's acquaintance. Tell him Philip is a fine fellow — carried everything before him at Oxford. And your son must be returned along with him for North Loamshire. You said he meant to stand?"

"I will write and let you know if Harold has any engagement for Thursday; he would of course be happy otherwise," said Mrs. Transome, evading the question.

"If not Thursday, the next day — the very first day he can."

The visitors left, and Mrs. Transome was almost glad of the painful bite which had saved her from being questioned further about Harold's politics. "This is the last visit I shall receive from them," she said to herself as the door closed behind them, and she rang for Denner.

"That poor creature is not happy, Sir Maximus," said Lady Debarry as they drove along. "Something annoys her about her son. I hope there is nothing unpleasant in his character. Either he kept his marriage a secret from her, or she was ashamed of it. He is thirty-four at least by this time. After living in the East so long he may have become a sort of person one would not care to be intimate with, and that savage boy — he doesn't look like a lady's child."

"Pooh, my dear," said Sir Maximus, "women think so much of those minutiae. In the present state of the country it is our duty to look at a man's position and politics. Philip and my brother are both of that opinion, and I think they know what's right, if any man does. We are bound to regard every man of our party as a public instrument, and to pull all together. The Transomes have always been a good Tory family, but it has been a cipher of late years. This young fellow coming back with a fortune to give the family a head and a position is a clear gain to the county; and with Philip he'll get into the right hands — of course he wants guiding, having

been out of the country so long. All we have to ask is, whether a man's a Tory, and will make a stand for the good of the country? — that's the plain English of the matter. And I do beg of you, my dear, to set aside all these gossiping niceties, and exert yourself, like a woman of sense and spirit as you are, to bring the right people together."

Here Sir Maximus gave a deep cough, took out his snuff-box, and tapped it: he had made a serious marital speech, an exertion to which he was rarely urged by anything smaller than a matter of conscience. And this outline of the whole duty of a Tory was matter of conscience with him; though the *Duffield Watchman* had pointed expressly to Sir Maximus Debarry amongst others, in branding the co-operation of the Tories as a conscious selfishness and reckless immorality, which, however, would be defeated by the co-operation of all the friends of truth and liberty, who, the *Watchman* trusted, would subordinate all non-political differences in order to return representatives pledged to support the present Government.

"I am sure, Sir Maximus," Lady Debarry answered, "you could not have observed that anything was wanting in my manners to Mrs. Transome."

"No, no, my dear; but I say this by way of caution. Never mind what was done at Smyrna, or whether Transome likes to sit with his heels tucked up. We may surely wink at a few things for the sake of the public interest, if God Almighty does; and if He didn't, I don't know what would have become of the country — Government could never have been carried on, and many a good battle would have been lost. That's the philosophy of the matter, and the common-sense too."

Good Sir Maximus gave a deep cough and tapped his box again, inwardly remarking, that if he had not been such a lazy fellow he might have made as good a figure as his son Philip.

But at this point the carriage, which was rolling by a turn towards Treby Magna, passed a well-dressed man, who raised his hat to Sir Maximus, and called to the coachman to stop.

"Excuse me, Sir Maximus," said this personage, standing uncovered at the carriage-door, "but I have just learned something of importance at Treby, which I thought you would like to know as soon as possible."

"Ah! what's that? Something about Garstin or Clement?" said Sir Maximus, seeing the other draw a poster from his pocket.

"No; rather worse, I fear you will think. A new Radical

candidate. I got this by a stratagem from the printer's boy. They're not posted yet."

"A Radical!" said Sir Maximus, in a tone of incredulous disgust, as he took the folded bill. "What fool is he? — he'll have no chance."

"They say he's richer than Garstin."

"Harold Transome!" shouted Sir Maximus, as he read the name in three-inch letters. "I don't believe it — it's a trick — it's a squib: why — why — we've just been to his place — eh? do you know any more? Speak, sir — speak; don't deal out your story like a damned mountebank, who wants to keep people gaping."

"Sir Maximus, pray don't give way so," said Lady Debarry.

"I'm afraid there's no doubt about it, sir," said Christian. "After getting the bill, I met Mr. Labron's clerk, and he said he had just had the whole story from Jermyn's clerk. The Ram Inn is engaged already, and a committee is being made up. He says Jermyn goes like a steam-engine, when he has a mind, although he makes such long-winded speeches."

"Jermyn be hanged for a two-faced rascal! Tell Mitchell to drive on. It's of no use to stay chattering here. Jump up on the box and go home with us. I may want you."

"You see I was right, Sir Maximus," said the Baronet's wife, "I had an instinct that we should find him an unpleasant person."

"Fudge! if you had such a fine instinct, why did you let us go to Transome Court and make fools of ourselves?"

"Would you have listened to me? But of course you will not have him to dine with you?"

"Dine with me? I should think not. I'd sooner he should dine off me. I see how it is clearly enough. He has become a regular beast among those Mahometans — he's got neither religion nor morals left. He can't know anything about English politics. He'll go and cut his own nose off as a land-holder, and never know. However, he won't get in — he'll spend his money for nothing."

"I fear he is a very licentious man," said Lady Debarry. "We know now why his mother seemed so uneasy. I should think she reflects a little, poor creature."

"It's a confounded nuisance we didn't meet Christian on our way, instead of coming back; but better now than later. He's an uncommonly adroit, useful fellow, that factotum of Philip's. I wish Phil would take my man and give me Christian. I'd make him house-steward; he might reduce the accounts a little."

Perhaps Sir Maximus would not have been so sanguine as to Mr. Christian's economical virtues if he had seen that gentleman relaxing himself the same evening among the other distinguished dependants of the family and frequenters of the steward's room. But a man of Sir Maximus's rank is like those antediluvian animals whom the system of things condemned to carry such a huge bulk that they really could not inspect their bodily appurtenance, and had no conception of their own tails: their parasites doubtless had a merry time of it, and often did extremely well when the high-bred saurian himself was ill at ease. Treby Manor, measured from the front saloon to the remotest shed, was as large as a moderate-sized village, and there were certainly more lights burning in it every evening, more wine, spirits, and ale drunk, more waste and more folly, than could be found in some large villages. There was fast revelry in the steward's room, and slow revelry in the Scotch bailiff's room; short whist, costume, and flirtation in the housekeeper's room, and the same at a lower price in the servants' hall; a select Olympian feast in the private apartment of the cook, who was a much grander person than her ladyship, and wore gold and jewelry to a vast amount of suet; a gambling group in the stables, and the coachman, perhaps the most innocent member of the establishment, tippling in majestic solitude by a fire in the harness room. For Sir Maximus, as every one said, was a gentleman of the right sort, condescended to no mean inquiries, greeted his head-servants with a "good-evening, gentlemen," when he met them in the Park, and only snarled in a subdued way when he looked over the accounts, willing to endure some personal inconvenience in order to keep up the institutions of the country, to maintain his hereditary establishment, and do his duty in that station of life—the station of the long-tailed saurian—to which it had pleased Providence to call him.

The focus of brilliancy at Treby Manor that evening was in no way the dining-room, where Sir Maximus sipped his port under some mental depression, as he discussed with his brother, the Reverend Augustus, the sad fact that one of the oldest names in the county was to be on the wrong side—not in the drawing-room, where Miss Debarry and Miss Selina, quietly elegant in their dress and manners, were feeling rather dull than otherwise, having finished Mr. Bulwer's "Eugene Aram," and being thrown back on the last great prose work of Mr. Southey, while their mamma slumbered a

little on the sofa. No; the centre of eager talk and enjoyment was the steward's room, where Mr. Scales, house-steward and head-butler, a man most solicitous about his boots, wristbands, the roll of his whiskers, and other attributes of a gentleman, distributed cigars, cognac, and whiskey, to various colleagues and guests who were discussing, with that freedom of conjecture which is one of our inalienable privileges as Britons, the probable amount of Harold Transome's fortune, concerning which fame had already been busy long enough to have acquired vast magnifying power.

The chief part in this scene was undoubtedly Mr. Christian's, although he had hitherto been comparatively silent; but he occupied two chairs with so much grace, throwing his right leg over the seat of the second, and resting his right hand on the back; he held his cigar and displayed a splendid seal-ring with such becoming nonchalance, and had his gray hair arranged with so much taste, that experienced eyes would at once have seen even the great Scales himself to be but a secondary character.

"Why," said Mr. Crowder, an old respectable tenant, though much in arrear as to his rent, who condescended frequently to drink in the steward's room for the sake of the conversation; "why, I suppose they get money so fast in the East — it's wonderful. Why," he went on, with a hesitating look towards Mr. Scales, "this Transome has p'raps got a matter of a hundred thousand."

"A hundred thousand, my dear sir! fiddle-stick's end of a hundred thousand," said Mr. Scales, with a contempt very painful to be borne by a modest man.

"Well," said Mr. Crowder, giving way under torture, as the all-knowing butler puffed and stared at him, "perhaps not so much as that."

"Not so much, sir! I tell you that a hundred thousand pounds is a bagatelle."

"Well, I know it's a big sum," said Mr. Crowder, deprecatingly.

Here there was a general laugh. All the other intellects present were more cultivated than Mr. Crowder's.

"Bagatelle is the French for trifle my friend," said Mr. Christian. "Don't talk over people's heads so, Scales. I shall have hard work to understand you myself soon."

"Come, that's a good one," said the head-gardener, who was a ready admirer; "I should like to hear the thing you don't understand, Christian."

"He's a first-rate hand at sneering," said Mr. Scales, rather nettled.

"Don't be waspish, man. I'll ring the bell for lemons, and make some punch. That's the thing for putting people up to the unknown tongues," said Mr. Christian, starting up, and slapping Scales's shoulder as he passed him.

"What I mean, Mr. Crowder, is this." Here Mr. Scales paused to puff, and pull down his waistcoat in a gentlemanly manner, and drink. He was wont in this way to give his hearers time for meditation.

"Come, then, speak English; I'm not against being taught," said the reasonable Crowder.

"What I means is, that in a large way of trade a man turns his capital over almost as soon as he can turn himself. Bless your soul! I know something about these matters, eh, Brent?"

"To be sure you do — few men more," said the gardener, who was the person appealed to.

"Not that I've had anything to do with commercial families myself. I've those feelings that I look to other things besides lucre. But I can't say that I've not been intimate with parties who have been less nice than I am myself; and knowing what I know, I shouldn't wonder if Transome had as much as five hundred thousand. Bless your soul, sir! people who get their money out of land are as long scraping five pounds together as your trading men are in turning five pounds into a hundred."

"That's a wicked thing, though," said Mr. Crowder, meditatively. "However," he went on, retreating from his difficult ground, "trade or no trade, the Transomes have been poor enough this many a long year. I've a brother a tenant on their estate — I ought to know a little bit about that."

"They've kept up no establishment at all," said Mr. Scales, with disgust. "They've even let their kitchen gardens. I suppose it was the eldest son's gambling. I've seen something of that. A man who has always lived in first-rate families is likely to know a thing or two on that subject."

"Ah, but it wasn't gambling did the first mischief," said Mr. Crowder, with a slight smile, feeling that it was his turn to have some superiority. "New-comers don't know what happened in this country twenty and thirty years ago. I'm turned fifty myself, and my father lived under Sir Maxum's father. But if anybody from London can tell me more than I know about this country-side, I'm willing to listen."

"What was it, then, if it wasn't gambling?" said Mr. Scales, with some impatience. "*I don't pretend to know.*"

"It was law — law — that's what it is. Not but what the Transomes always won."

"And always lost," said the too-ready Scales. "Yes, yes; I think we all know the nature of law."

"There was the last suit of all made the most noise, as I understood," continued Mr. Crowder; "but it wasn't tried hereabout. They said there was a deal o' false swearing. Some young man pretended to be the true heir — let me see — I can't justly remember the names — he'd got two. *He* swore he was one man, and *they* swore he was another. However, Lawyer Jermyn won it — they say he'd win a game against the Old One himself — and the young fellow turned out to be a scamp. Stop a bit — his name was Scaddon — Henry Scaddon."

Mr. Christian here let a lemon slip from his hand into the punch-bowl with a plash which sent some of the nectar into the company's faces.

"Hallo! What a bungler I am!" he said, looking as if he were quite jarred by this unusual awkwardness of his. "Go on with your tale, Mr. Crowder — a scamp named Henry Scaddon."

"Well, that's the tale," said Mr. Crowder. "He was never seen nothing of any more. It was a deal talked of at the time — and I've sat by; and my father used to shake his head; and always when this Mrs. Transome was talked of, he used to shake his head, and say she carried things with a high hand once. But, Lord! it was before the battle of Waterloo, and I'm a poor hand at tales; I don't see much good in 'em myself — but if anybody'll tell me a cure for the sheep-rot I'll thank him."

Here Mr. Crowder relapsed into smoking and silence, a little discomfited that the knowledge of which he had been delivered, had turned out rather a shapeless and insignificant birth.

"Well, well, by-gones should be by-gones; there are secrets in most good families," said Mr. Scales, winking, "and this young Transome, coming back with a fortune to keep up the establishment, and have things done in a decent and gentlemanly way — it would all have been right if he'd not been this sort of Radical madman. But now he's done for himself. I heard Sir Maximus say at dinner that he would be excommunicated; and that's a pretty strong word, I take it."

"What does it mean, Scales?" said Mr. Christian, who loved tormenting.

"Ay, what's the meaning?" insisted Mr. Crowder, encouraged by finding that even Christian was in the dark.

"Well, it's a law term — speaking in a figurative sort of way — meaning that a Radical was no gentleman."

"Perhaps it's partly accounted for by his getting his money so fast, and in foreign countries," said Mr. Crowder, tentatively. "It's reasonable to think he'd be against the land and this country — eh, Sircome?"

Sircome was an eminent miller who had considerable business transactions at the Manor, and appreciated Mr. Scales's merits at a handsome percentage on the yearly account. He was a highly honorable tradesman, but in this and in other matters submitted to the institutions of his country; for great houses, as he observed, must have great butlers. He replied to his friend Crowder sententiously.

"I say nothing. Before I bring words to market, I should like to see 'em a bit scarcer. There's the land and there's trade — I hold with both. I swim with the stream."

"Hey-day, Mr. Sircome! that's a Radical maxim," said Mr. Christian, who knew that Mr. Sircome's last sentence was his favorite formula. "I advise you to give it up, else it will injure the quality of your flour."

"A Radical maxim!" said Mr. Sircome, in a tone of angry astonishment. "I should like to hear you prove that. It's as old as my grandfather, any how."

"I'll prove it in one minute," said the glib Christian. "Reform has set in by the will of the majority — that's the rabble, you know; and the respectability and good sense of the country, which are in the minority, are afraid of Reform running on too fast. So the stream must be running towards Reform and Radicalism; and if you swim with it, Mr. Sircome, you're a Reformer and a Radical, and your flour is objectionable, and not full weight — and being tried by Scales, will be found wanting."

There was a roar of laughter. This pun upon Scales was highly appreciated by every one except the miller and the butler. The latter pulled down his waistcoat, and puffed and stared in rather an excited manner. Mr. Christian's wit, in general, seemed to him a poor kind of quibbling.

"What a fellow you are for fence, Christian," said the gardener. "Hang me, if I don't think you're up to everything."

"That's a compliment you might pay Old Nick, if you come to that," said Mr. Sircome, who was in the painful position of a man deprived of his formula.

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Scales; "I'm no fool myself, and could parry a thrust if I liked, but I shouldn't like it to be said of me that I was up to everything. I'll keep a little principle if you please."

"To be sure," said Christian, ladling out the punch. "What would justice be without Scales?"

The laughter was not quite so full-throated as before. Such excessive cleverness *was* a little Satanic.

"A joke's a joke among gentlemen," said the butler, getting exasperated; "I think there has been quite liberties enough taken with my name. But if you must talk about names, I've heard of a party before now calling himself a Christian, and being anything *but* it."

"Come, that's beyond a joke," said the surgeon's assistant, a fast man, whose chief scene of dissipation was the Manor. "Let it drop, Scales."

"Yes, I dare say it's beyond a joke. I'm not a harlequin to talk nothing but jokes. I leave that to other Christians, who are up to everything, and have been everywhere — to the hulks, for what I know; and more than that, they come from nobody knows where, and try to worm themselves into gentlemen's confidence, to the prejudice of their betters."

There was a stricter sequence in Mr. Scales's angry eloquence than was apparent — some chief links being confined to his own breast, as is often the case in energetic discourse. The company were in a state of expectation. There was something behind worth knowing, and something before them worth seeing. In the general decay of other fine British pug-nacious sports, a quarrel between gentlemen was all the more exciting, and though no one would himself have liked to turn on Scales, no one was sorry for the chance of seeing him put down. But the amazing Christian was unmoved. He had taken out his handkerchief and was rubbing his lips carefully. After a slight pause, he spoke with perfect coolness.

"I don't intend to quarrel with you, Scales. Such talk as this is not profitable to either of us. It makes you purple in the face — you *are* apoplectic, you know — and it spoils good company. Better tell a few fibs about me behind my back — it will heat you less, and do me more harm. I'll leave you to it; I shall go and have a game at whist with the ladies."

As the door closed behind the questionable Christian, Mr. Scales was in a state of frustration that prevented speech. Every one was rather embarrassed.

"That's a most uncommon sort o' fellow," said Mr. Crowder,

in an undertone, to his next neighbor, the gardener. "Why, Mr. Philip picked him up in foreign parts, didn't he?"

"He was a courier," said the gardener. "He's had a deal of experience. And I believe, by what I can make out — for he's been pretty free with me sometimes — there was a time when he was in that rank of life that he fought a duel."

"Ah! that makes him such a cool chap," said Mr. Crowder.

"He's what I call an overbearing fellow," said Mr. Sircome, also *sotto voce*, to his next neighbor, Mr. Filmore, the surgeon's assistant. "He runs you down with a sort of talk that's neither here nor there. He's got a deal too many samples in his pocket for me."

"All I know is, he's a wonderful hand at cards," said Mr. Filmore, whose whiskers and shirt-pin were quite above the average. "I wish I could play *écarté* as he does; it's beautiful to see him; he can make a man look pretty blue — he'll empty his pocket for him in no time."

"That's none to his credit," said Mr. Sircome.

The conversation had in this way broken up into *tête-à-tête*, and the hilarity of the evening might be considered a failure. Still the punch was drunk, the accounts were duly swelled, and, notwithstanding the innovating spirit of the time, Sir Maximus Debarry's establishment was kept up in a sound hereditary British manner.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Rumor doth double like the voice and echo."

SHAKESPEARE.

The mind of a man is as a country which was once open to squatters, who have bred and multiplied and become masters of the land. But then happeneth a time when new and hungry comers dispute the land; and there is trial of strength, and the strouger wins. Nevertheless the first squatters be they who have prepared the ground, and the crops to the end will be sequent (though chiefly on the nature of the soil, as of light sand, mixed loam, or heavy clay, yet) somewhat on the primal labor and sowing.

THAT talkative maiden, Rumor, though in the interest of art she is figured as a youthful winged beauty with flowing garments, soaring above the heads of men, and breathing world-thrilling news through a gracefully-curved trumpet, is in fact a very old maid, who puckers her silly face by the fireside, and really does no more than chirp a wrong guess or a lame story into the ear of a fellow-gossip; all the rest of

the work attributed to her is done by the ordinary working of those passions against which men pray in the Litany, with the help of a plentiful stupidity against which we have never yet had any authorized form of prayer.

When Mr. Scales's strong need to make an impressive figure in conversation, together with his very slight need of any other premise than his own sense of his wide general knowledge and probable infallibility, led him to specify five hundred thousand as the lowest admissible amount of Harold Transome's commercially-acquired fortune, it was not fair to put this down to poor old Miss Rumor, who had only told Scales that the fortune was considerable. And again, when the curt Mr. Sircome found occasion at Treby to mention the five hundred thousand as a fact that folks seemed pretty sure about, this expansion of the butler into "folks" was entirely due to Mr. Sircome's habitual preference for words which could not be laid hold of or give people a handle over him. It was in this simple way that the report of Harold Transome's fortune spread and was magnified, adding much lustre to his opinions in the eyes of Liberals, and compelling even men of the opposite party to admit that it increased his eligibility as a member for North Loamshire. It was observed by a sound thinker in these parts that property was ballast; and when once the aptness of that metaphor had been perceived, it followed that a man was not fit to navigate the sea of politics without a great deal of such ballast; and that, rightly understood, whatever increased the expense of election, inasmuch as it virtually raised the property qualification, was an unspeakable boon to the country.

Meanwhile the fortune that was getting larger in the imagination of constituents was shrinking a little in the imagination of its owner. It was hardly more than a hundred and fifty thousand; and there were not only the heavy mortgages to be paid off, but also a large amount of capital was needed in order to repair the farm-buildings all over the estate, to carry out extensive draining, and make allowances to incoming tenants, which might remove the difficulty of newly letting the farms in a time of agricultural depression. The farms actually tenanted were held by men who had begged hard to succeed their fathers in getting a little poorer every year, on land which was also getting poorer, where the highest rate of increase was in the arrears of rent, and where the master, in crushed hat and corduroys, looked pitifully lean and care-worn by the side of pauper laborers, who showed

that superior assimilating power often observed to attend nourishment by the public money. Mr. Goffe, of Rabbit's End, had never had it explained to him that, according to the true theory of rent, land must inevitably be given up when it would not yield a profit equal to the ordinary rate of interest; so that from want of knowing what was inevitable, and not from a Titanic spirit of opposition, he kept on his land. He often said of himself, with a melancholy wipe of his sleeve across his brow, that he "didn't know which-a-way to turn;" and he would have been still more at a loss on the subject if he had quitted Rabbit's End with a wagonful of furniture and utensils, a file of receipts, a wife with five children, and a shepherd-dog in low spirits.

It took no long time for Harold Transome to discover this state of things, and to see, moreover, that, except on the demesne immediately around the house, the timber had been mismanaged. The woods had been recklessly thinned, and there had been insufficient planting. He had not yet thoroughly investigated the various accounts kept by his mother, by Jermyn, and by Banks the bailiff; but what had been done with the large sums which had been received for timber was a suspicious mystery to him. He observed that the farm held by Jermyn was in first-rate order, that a good deal had been spent on the buildings, and that the rent had stood unpaid. Mrs. Transome had taken an opportunity of saying that Jermyn had had some of the mortgage-deeds transferred to him, and that his rent was set against so much interest. Harold had only said, in his careless yet decisive way, "Oh, Jermyn be hanged! It seems to me, if Durfey hadn't died and made room for me, Jermyn would have ended by coming to live here, and you would have had to keep the lodge and open the gate for his carriage. But I shall pay him off — mortgages and all — by and by. I'll owe him nothing — not even a curse." Mrs. Transome said no more. Harold did not care to enter fully into the subject with his mother. The fact that she had been active in the management of the estate — had ridden about it continually, had busied herself with accounts, had been head-bailiff of the vacant farms, and had yet allowed things to go wrong — was set down by him simply to the general futility of women's attempts to transact men's business. He did not want to say anything to annoy her: he was only determined to let her understand, as quietly as possible, that she had better cease all interference.

Mrs. Transome did understand this; and it was very little

that she dared to say on business, though there was a fierce struggle of her anger and pride with a dread which was nevertheless supreme. As to the old tenants, she only observed, on hearing Harold burst forth about their wretched condition, "that with the estate so burthened, the yearly loss by arrears could better be borne than the outlay and sacrifice necessary in order to let the farms anew."

"I was really capable of calculating, Harold," she ended, with a touch of bitterness. "It seems easy to deal with farmers and their affairs when you only see them in print, I dare say; but it's not quite so easy when you live among them. You have only to look at Sir Maximus's estate: you will see plenty of the same thing. The times have been dreadful, and old families like to keep their old tenants. But I dare say that is Toryism."

"It's a hash of odds and ends, if that is Toryism, my dear mother. However, I wish you had kept three more old tenants; for then I should have had three more fifty-pound voters. And, in a hard run, one may be beaten by a head. But," Harold added, smiling and handing her a ball of worsted which had fallen, "a woman ought to be a Tory, and graceful, and handsome, like you. I should hate a woman who took up my opinions, and talked for me. I'm an Oriental, you know. I say, mother, shall we have this room furnished with rose-color? I notice that it suits your bright gray hair."

Harold thought it was only natural that his mother should have been in a sort of subjection to Jermyn throughout the awkward circumstances of the family. It was the way of women, and all weak minds, to think that what they had been used to was inalterable, and any quarrel with a man who managed private affairs was necessarily a formidable thing. He himself was proceeding very cautiously, and preferred not even to know too much just at present, lest a certain personal antipathy he was conscious of towards Jermyn, and an occasional liability to exasperation, should get the better of a calm and clear-sighted resolve not to quarrel with the man while he could be of use. Harold would have been disgusted with himself if he had helped to frustrate his own purpose. And his strongest purpose now was to get returned for Parliament, to make figure there as a Liberal member, and to become on all grounds a personage of weight in North Loamshire.

How Harold Transome came to be a Liberal in opposition to all the traditions of his family, was a more subtle inquiry than he had ever cared to follow out. The newspapers under

took to explain it. The *North Loamshire Herald* witnessed with a grief and disgust certain to be shared by all persons who were actuated by wholesome British feeling, an example of defection in the inheritor of a family name which in times past had been associated with attachment to right principle, and with the maintenance of our constitution in Church and State; and pointed to it as an additional proof that men who had passed any large portion of their lives beyond the limits of our favored country, usually contracted not only a laxity of feeling towards Protestantism, nay, towards religion itself — a latitudinarian spirit hardly distinguishable from atheism — but also a levity of disposition, inducing them to tamper with those institutions by which alone Great Britain had risen to her pre-eminence among the nations. Such men, infected with outlandish habits, intoxicated with vanity, grasping at momentary power by flattery of the multitude, fearless because godless, liberal because un-English, were ready to pull one stone from under another in the national edifice, till the great structure tottered to its fall. On the other hand, the *Duffield Watchman* saw in this signal instance of self-liberation from the trammels of prejudice, a decisive guaranty of intellectual pre-eminence, united with a generous sensibility to the claims of man as man, which had burst asunder, and cast off, by a spontaneous exertion of energy, the cramping out-worn shell of hereditary bias and class interest.

But these large-minded guides of public opinion argued from wider data than could be furnished by any knowledge of the particular case concerned. Harold Transome was neither the dissolute cosmopolitan so vigorously sketched by the *Tory Herald*, nor the intellectual giant and moral lobster suggested by the liberal imagination of the *Watchman*. Twenty years ago he had been a bright, active, good-tempered lad, with sharp eyes and a good aim; he delighted in success and in predominance; but he did not long for an impossible predominance, and become sour and sulky because it was impossible. He played at the games he was clever in, and usually won; all other games he let alone, and thought them of little worth. At home and at Eton he had been side by side with his stupid elder brother Durfey, whom he despised; and he very early began to reflect that since this Caliban in miniature was older than himself, he must carve out his own fortune. That was a nuisance; and on the whole the world seemed rather ill-arranged, at Eton especially, where there were many reasons why Harold made no great figure. He was not sorry the money

was wanting to send him to Oxford; he did not see the good of Oxford; he had been surrounded by many things during his short life, of which he had distinctly said to himself that he did not see the good, and he was not disposed to venerate on the strength of any good that others saw. He turned his back on home very cheerfully, though he was rather fond of his mother, and very fond of Transome Court, and the river where he had been used to fish; but he said to himself as he passed the lodge-gates, "I'll get rich somehow, and have an estate of my own, and do what I like with it." This determined aiming at something not easy but clearly possible, marked the direction in which Harold's nature was strong; he had the energetic will and muscle, the self-confidence, the quick perception, and the narrow imagination which make what is admiringly called the practical mind.

Since then his character had been ripened by a various experience, and also by much knowledge which he had set himself deliberately to gain. But the man was no more than the boy writ large, with an extensive commentary. The years had nourished an inclination to as much opposition as would enable him to assert his own independence and power without throwing himself into that tabooed condition which robs power of its triumph. And this inclination had helped his shrewdness in forming judgments which were at once innovating and moderate. He was addicted at once to rebellion and to conformity, and only an intimate personal knowledge could enable any one to predict where his conformity would begin. The limit was not defined by theory, but was drawn in an irregular zigzag by early disposition and association; and his resolution, of which he had never lost hold, to be a thorough Englishman again some day, had kept up the habit of considering all his conclusions with reference to English politics and English social conditions. He meant to stand up for every change that the economical condition of the country required, and he had an angry contempt for men with coronets on their coaches, but too small a share of brains to see when they had better make a virtue of necessity. His respect was rather for men who had no coronets, but who achieved a just influence by furthering all measures which the common-sense of the country, and the increasing self-assertion of the majority, peremptorily demanded. He could be such a man himself.

In fact Harold Transome was a clever, frank, good-natured egoist; not stringently consistent, but without any disposition to falsity; proud, but with a pride that was moulded in an

individual rather than an hereditary form; unspeculative, unsentimental, unsympathetic; fond of sensual pleasures, but disinclined to all vice, and attached as a healthy, clear-sighted person, to all conventional morality, construed with a certain freedom, like doctrinal articles to which the public order may require subscription. A character is apt to look but indifferently, written out in this way. Reduced to a map, our premises seem insignificant, but they make, nevertheless, a very pretty freehold to live in and walk over; and so, if Harold Transome had been among your acquaintances, and you had observed his qualities through the medium of his agreeable person, bright smile, and a certain easy charm which accompanies sensuousness when unsullied by coarseness — through the medium also of the many opportunities in which he would have made himself useful or pleasant to you — you would have thought him a good fellow, highly acceptable as a guest, a colleague, or a brother-in-law. Whether all mothers would have liked him as a son, is another question.

It is a fact perhaps kept a little too much in the background, that mothers have a self larger than their maternity, and that when their sons have become taller than themselves, and are gone from them to college or into the world, there are wide spaces of their time which are not filled with praying for their boys, reading old letters, and envying yet blessing those who are attending to their shirt-buttons. Mrs. Transome was certainly not one of those bland, adoring, and gently tearful women. After sharing the common dream that when a beautiful man-child was born to her, her cup of happiness would be full, she had travelled through long years apart from that child to find herself at last in the presence of a son of whom she was afraid, who was utterly unmanageable by her, and to whose sentiments in any given case she possessed no key. Yet Harold was a kind son: he kissed his mother's brow, offered her his arm, let her choose what she liked for the house and garden, asked her whether she would have bays or grays for her new carriage, and was bent on seeing her make as good a figure in the neighborhood as any other woman of her rank. She trembled under this kindness: it was not enough to satisfy her; still, if it should ever cease and give place to something else — she was too uncertain about Harold's feelings to imagine clearly what that something would be. The finest threads, such as no eye sees, if bound cunningly about the sensitive flesh, so that the move-

ment to break them would bring torture, may make a worse bondage than any fetters. Mrs. Transome felt the fatal threads about her, and the bitterness of this helpless bondage mingled itself with the new elegancies of the dining and drawing rooms, and all the household changes which Harold had ordered to be brought about with magical quickness. Nothing was as she had once expected it would be. If Harold had shown the least care to have her stay in the room with him—if he had really cared for her opinion—if he had been what she had dreamed he would be in the eyes of those people who had made her world—if all the past could be dissolved, and leave no solid trace of itself—mighty *ifs* that were all impossible—she would have tasted some joy; but now she began to look back with regrets to the days when she sat in loneliness among the old drapery, and still longed for something that might happen. Yet, save in a bitter little speech, or in a deep sigh heard by no one besides Denner, she kept all these things hidden in her heart, and went out in the autumn sunshine to overlook the alterations in the pleasure-grounds very much as a happy woman might have done. One day, however, when she was occupied in this way, an occasion came on which she chose to express indirectly a part of her inward care.

She was standing on the broad gravel in the afternoon; the long shadows lay on the grass; the light seemed the more glorious because of the reddened and golden trees. The gardeners were busy at their pleasant work; the newly turned soil gave out an agreeable fragrance; and little Harry was playing with Nimrod round old Mr. Transome, who sat placidly on a low garden-chair. The scene would have made a charming picture of English domestic life, and the handsome, majestic, gray-haired woman (obviously grandmamma) would have been especially admired. But the artist would have felt it requisite to turn her face towards her husband and little grandson, and to have given her an elderly amiability of expression which would have divided remark with his exquisite rendering of her Indian shawl. Mrs. Transome's face was turned the other way, and for this reason she only heard an approaching step, and did not see whose it was; yet it startled her: it was not quick enough to be her son's step, and besides, Harold was away at Duffield. It was Mr. Jermyn's.

CHAPTER IX.

"A woman, naturally born to fears." — *King John*.

"Methinks
Some unborn sorrow, ripe in fortune's womb,
Is coming towards me; and my inward soul
With nothing trembles." — *King Richard II.*

MATTHEW JERMYN approached Mrs. Transome taking off his hat and smiling. She did not smile, but said, —

"You knew Harold was not at home?"

"Yes; I came to see you, to know if you had any wishes that I could further, since I have not had an opportunity of consulting you since he came home."

"Let us walk towards the Rookery, then."

They turned together, Mr. Jermyn still keeping his hat off and holding it behind him; the air was so soft and agreeable that Mrs. Transome herself had nothing but a large veil over her head.

They walked for a little while in silence till they were out of sight, under tall trees, and treading noiselessly on falling leaves. What Jermyn was really most anxious about, was to learn from Mrs. Transome whether anything had transpired that was significant of Harold's disposition towards him, which he suspected to be very far from friendly. Jermyn was not naturally flinty-hearted; at five and twenty he had written verses, and had got himself wet through in order not to disappoint a dark-eyed woman whom he was proud to believe in love with him; but a family man with grown-up sons and daughters, a man with a professional position and complicated affairs that make it hard to ascertain the exact relation between property and liabilities, necessarily thinks of himself and what may be impending.

"Harold is remarkably acute and clever," he began at last, since Mrs. Transome did not speak. "If he gets into Parliament, I have no doubt he will distinguish himself. He has a quick eye for business of all kinds."

"That is no comfort to me," said Mrs. Transome. To-day she was more conscious than usual of that bitterness which was always in her mind in Jermyn's presence, but which was

carefully suppressed:—suppressed because she could not endure that the degradation she inwardly felt should ever become visible or audible in acts or words of her own—should ever be reflected in any word or look of his. For years there had been a deep silence about the past between them: on her side, because she remembered; on his, because he more and more forgot.

"I trust he is not unkind to you in any way. I know his opinions pain you; but I trust you find him in everything else disposed to be a good son."

"Oh, to be sure—good as men are disposed to be to women, giving them cushions and carriages, and recommending them to enjoy themselves, and then expecting them to be contented under contempt and neglect. I have no power over him—remember that—none."

Jermyn turned to look in Mrs. Transome's face: it was long since he had heard her speak to him as if she were losing her self-command.

"Has he shown any unpleasant feeling about your management of the affairs?"

"*My* management of the affairs!" Mrs. Transome said, with concentrated rage, flashing a fierce look at Jermyn. She checked herself: she felt as if she were lighting a torch to flare on her own past folly and misery. It was a resolve which had become a habit, that she would never quarrel with this man—never tell him what she saw him to be. She had kept her woman's pride and sensibility intact: through all her life there had vibrated the maiden need to have her hand kissed and be the object of chivalry. And so she sank into silence again, trembling.

Jermyn felt annoyed—nothing more. There was nothing in his mind corresponding to the intricate meshes of sensitiveness in Mrs. Transome's. He was anything but stupid; yet he always blundered when he wanted to be delicate or magnanimous; he constantly sought to soothe others by praising himself. Moral vulgarity cleaved to him like an hereditary odor. He blundered now.

"My dear Mrs. Transome," he said, in a tone of bland kindness, "you are agitated—you appear angry with me. Yet I think, if you consider, you will see that you have nothing to complain of in me, unless you will complain of the inevitable course of man's life. I have always met your wishes both in happy circumstances and in unhappy ones. I should be ready to do so now, if it were possible."

Every sentence was as pleasant to her as if it had been cut in her bared arm. Some men's kindness and love-making are more exasperating, more humiliating than others' derision; but the pitiable woman who has once made herself secretly dependent on a man who is beneath her in feeling, must bear that humiliation for fear of worse. Coarse kindness is at least better than coarse anger; and in all private quarrels the duller nature is triumphant by reason of its dulness. Mrs. Transome knew in her inmost soul that those relations which had sealed her lips on Jermyn's conduct in business matters, had been with him a ground for presuming that he should have impunity in any lax dealing into which circumstances had led him. She knew that she herself had endured all the more privation because of his dishonest selfishness. And now, Harold's long-deferred heirship, and his return with startlingly unexpected penetration, activity, and assertion of mastery, had placed them both in the full presence of a difficulty which had been prepared by the years of vague uncertainty as to issues. In this position, with a great dread hanging over her, which Jermyn knew, and ought to have felt that he had caused her, she was inclined to lash him with indignation, to scorch him with the words that were just the fit names for his doings — inclined all the more when he spoke with an insolent blandness, ignoring all that was truly in her heart. But no sooner did the words "You have brought it on me" rise within her than she heard within also the retort, "You brought it on yourself." Not for all the world beside could she bear to hear that retort uttered from without. What did she do? With strange sequence to all that rapid tumult, after a few moments' silence she said, in a gentle and almost tremulous voice, —

"Let me take your arm."

He gave it immediately, putting on his hat and wondering. For more than twenty years Mrs. Transome had never chosen to take his arm.

"I have but one thing to ask you. Make me a promise."

"What is it?"

"That you will never quarrel with Harold."

"You must know that it is my wish not to quarrel with him."

"But make a vow — fix it in your mind as a thing not to be done. Bear anything from him rather than quarrel with him."

"A man can't make a vow not to quarrel," said Jermyn,

who was already a little irritated by the implication that Harold might be disposed to use him roughly. "A man's temper may get the better of him at any moment. I am not prepared to bear *anything*."

"Good God!" said Mrs. Transome, taking her hand from his arm, "is it possible you don't feel how horrible it would be?"

As she took away her hand, Jermyn let his arm fall, put both his hands in his pockets, and shrugging his shoulders said, "I shall use him as he uses me."

Jermyn had turned round his savage side, and the blandness was out of sight. It was this that had always frightened Mrs. Transome: there was a possibility of fierce insolence in this man who was to pass with those nearest to her as her indebted servant, but whose brand she secretly bore. She was as powerless with him as she was with her son.

This woman, who loved rule, dared not speak another word of attempted persuasion. They were both silent, taking the nearest way into the sunshine again. There was a half-formed wish in both their minds—even in the mother's—that Harold Transome had never been born.

"We are working hard for the election," said Jermyn, recovering himself, as they turned into the sunshine again. "I think we shall get him returned, and in that case he will be in high good-humor. Everything will be more propitious than you are apt to think. You must persuade yourself," he added, smiling at her, "that it is better for a man of his position to be in Parliament on the wrong side than not to be in at all."

"Never," said Mrs. Transome. "I am too old to learn to call bitter sweet and sweet bitter. But what I may think or feel is of no consequence now. I am as unnecessary as a chimney ornament."

And in this way they parted on the gravel, in that pretty scene where they had met. Mrs. Transome shivered as she stood alone: all around her, where there had once been brightness and warmth, there were white ashes, and the sunshine looked dreary as it fell on them.

Mr. Jermyn's heaviest reflections in riding homeward turned on the possibility of incidents between himself and Harold Transome which would have disagreeable results, requiring him to raise money, and perhaps causing scandal, which in its way might also help to create a monetary deficit. A man of sixty, with a wife whose Duffield connections were

of the highest respectability, with a family of tall daughters, an expensive establishment, and a large professional business, owed a great deal more to himself as the mainstay of all those solidities, than to feelings and ideas which were quite unsubstantial. There were many unfortunate coincidences which placed Mr. Jermyn in an uncomfortable position just now; he had not been much to blame, he considered; if it had not been for a sudden turn of affairs no one would have complained. He defied any man to say that he had intended to wrong people; he was able to refund, to make reprisals, if they could be fairly demanded. Only he would certainly have preferred that they should not be demanded.

A German poet was intrusted with a particularly fine sausage, which he was to convey to the donor's friend at Paris. In the course of a long journey he smelt the sausage; he got hungry, and desired to taste it; he pared a morsel off, then another, and another, in successive moments of temptation, till at last the sausage was, humanly speaking, at an end. The offence had not been premeditated. The poet had never loved meanness, but he loved sausage; and the result was undeniably awkward.

So it was with Matthew Jermyn. He was far from liking that ugly abstraction rascality, but he had liked other things which had suggested nibbling. He had had to do many things in law and in daily life which, in the abstract, he would have condemned; and indeed he had never been tempted by them in the abstract. Here, in fact, was the inconvenience; he had sinned for the sake of particular concrete things, and particular concrete consequences were likely to follow.

But he was a man of resolution, who, having made out what was the best course to take under a difficulty, went straight to his work. The election must be won: that would put Harold in good-humor, give him something to do, and leave himself more time to prepare for any crisis.

He was in anything but low spirits that evening. It was his eldest daughter's birthday, and the young people had a dance. Papa was delightful—stood up for a quadrille and a country-dance, told stories at supper, and made humorous quotations from his early readings: if these were Latin, he apologized, and translated to the ladies; so that a deaf lady-visitor from Duffield kept her trumpet up continually, lest she should lose any of Mr. Jermyn's conversation, and wished

that her niece Maria had been present, who was young and had a good memory.

Still the party was smaller than usual, for some families in Treby refused to visit Jermyrn, now that he was concerned for a Radical candidate.

CHAPTER X.

—“He made love neither with roses, nor with apples, nor with locks of hair.”
—THEOCRITUS.

ONE Sunday afternoon Felix Holt rapped at the door of Mr. Lyon's house, although he could hear the voice of the minister preaching in the chapel. He stood with a book under his arm, apparently confident that there was some one in the house to open the door for him. In fact, Esther never went to chapel in the afternoon: that “exercise” made her head ache.

In these September weeks Felix had got rather intimate with Mr. Lyon. They shared the same political sympathies; and though, to Liberals who had neither freehold nor copyhold nor leasehold, the share in a county election consisted chiefly of that prescriptive amusement of the majority known as “looking on,” there was still something to be said on the occasion, if not to be done. Perhaps the most delightful friendships are those in which there is much agreement, much disputation, and yet more personal liking; and the advent of the public-spirited, contradictory, yet affectionate Felix, into Treby life, had made a welcome epoch to the minister. To talk with this young man, who, though hopeful, had a singularity which some might at once have pronounced heresy, but which Mr. Lyon persisted in regarding as orthodoxy “in the making,” was like a good bite to strong teeth after a too plentiful allowance of spoon meat. To cultivate his society with a view to checking his erratic tendencies was a laudable purpose; but perhaps if Felix had been rapidly subdued and reduced to conformity, little Mr. Lyon would have found the conversation much flatter.

Esther had not seen so much of their new acquaintance as her father had. But she had begun to find him amusing, and also rather irritating to her woman's love of conquest. He always opposed and criticised her; and besides that, he looked

at her as if he never saw a single detail about her person—quite as if she were a middle-aged woman in a cap. She did not believe that he had ever admired her hands, or her long neck, or her graceful movements, which had made all the girls at school call her Calypso (doubtless from their familiarity with “*Télémaque*”). Felix ought properly to have been a little in love with her—never mentioning it, of course, because that would have been disagreeable, and his being a regular lover was out of the question. But it was quite clear that, instead of feeling any disadvantage on his own side, he held himself to be immeasurably her superior: and, what was worse, Esther had a secret consciousness that he was her superior. She was all the more vexed at the suspicion that he thought slightly of her; and wished in her vexation that she could have found more fault with him—that she had not been obliged to admire more and more the varying expressions of his open face and his deliciously good-humored laugh, always loud at a joke against himself. Besides, she could not help having her curiosity roused by the unusual combinations both in his mind and in his outward position, and she had surprised herself as well as her father one day by suddenly starting up and proposing to walk with him when he was going to pay an afternoon visit to Mrs. Holt, to try and soothe her concerning Felix. “What a mother he has!” she said to herself when they came away again; “but, rude and queer as he is, I cannot say there is anything vulgar about him. Yet—I don’t know—if I saw him by the side of a finished gentleman.” Esther wished that finished gentlemen were among her acquaintances: he would certainly admire her, and make her aware of Felix’s inferiority.

On this particular Sunday afternoon, when she heard the knock at the door, she was seated in the kitchen corner between the fire and the window reading “*Réné*.” Certainly in her well-fitting light-blue dress—she almost always wore some shade of blue—with her delicate sandalled slipper stretched towards the fire, her little gold watch, which had cost her nearly a quarter’s earnings, visible at her side, her slender fingers playing with a shower of brown curls, and a coronet of shining plaits at the summit of her head, she was a remarkable Cinderella. When the rap came, she colored, and was going to shut her book and put it out of the way on the window-ledge behind her; but she desisted with a little toss, laid it open on the table beside her, and walked to the outer door, which opened into the kitchen. There was rather

a mischievous gleam in her face: the rap was not a small one; it came probably from a large personage with a vigorous arm.

"Good afternoon, Miss Lyon," said Felix, taking off his cloth cap: he resolutely declined the expensive ugliness of a hat, and in a poked cap and without a cravat, made a figure at which his mother cried every Sunday, and thought of with a slow shake of the head at several passages in the minister's prayer.

"Dear me, it is you, Mr. Holt! I fear you will have to wait some time before you can see my father. The sermon is not ended yet, and there will be the hymn and the prayer, and perhaps other things to detain him."

"Well, will you let me sit down in the kitchen? I don't want to be a bore."

"Oh, no," said Esther, with her pretty light laugh, "I always give you credit for not meaning it. Pray come in, if you don't mind waiting. I was sitting in the kitchen: the kettle is singing quite prettily. It is much nicer than the parlor — not half so ugly."

"There I agree with you."

"How very extraordinary! But if you prefer the kitchen, and don't want to sit with me, I can go into the parlor."

"I came on purpose to sit with you," said Felix, in his blunt way, "but I thought it likely you might be vexed at seeing me. I wanted to talk to you, but I've got nothing pleasant to say. As your father would have it, I'm not given to prophesy smooth things — to prophesy deceit."

"I understand," said Esther, sitting down. "Pray be seated. You thought I had no afternoon sermon, so you came to give me one."

"Yes," said Felix, seating himself sideways in a chair not far off her, and leaning over the back to look at her with his large clear gray eyes, "and my text is something you said the other day. You said you didn't mind about people having right opinions so that they had good taste. Now I want you to see what shallow stuff that is."

"Oh, I don't doubt it if you say so. I know you are a person of right opinions."

"But by opinions you mean men's thoughts about great subjects, and by taste you mean their thoughts about small ones: dress, behavior, amusements, ornaments."

"Well — yes — or rather, their sensibilities about those things."

"It comes to the same thing; thoughts, opinions, knowl-

edge, are only a sensibility to facts and ideas. If I understand a geometrical problem, it is because I have a sensibility to the way in which lines and figures are related to each other; and I want you to see that the creature who has the sensibilities that you call taste, and not the sensibilities that you call opinions, is simply a lower, pettier sort of being — an insect that notices the shaking of the table, but never notices the thunder."

"Very well, I am an insect; yet I notice that you are thundering at me."

"No, you are not an insect. That is what exasperates me at your making a boast of littleness. You have enough understanding to make it wicked that you should add one more to the women who hinder men's lives from having any nobleness in them."

Esther colored deeply: she resented this speech, yet she disliked it less than many Felix had addressed to her.

"What is my horrible guilt?" she said, rising and standing, as she was wont, with one foot on the fender, and looking at the fire. If it had been any one but Felix who was near her, it might have occurred to her that this attitude showed her to advantage; but she had only a mortified sense that he was quite indifferent to what others praised her for.

"Why do you read this mawkish stuff on a Sunday, for example?" he said, snatching up "*Réné*," and running his eye over the pages.

"Why don't you always go to chapel, Mr. Holt, and read Howe's '*Living Temple*,' and join the Church?"

"There's just the difference between us — I know why I don't do those things. I distinctly see that I can do something better. I have other principles, and should sink myself by doing what I don't recognize as the best."

"I understand," said Esther, as lightly as she could, to conceal her bitterness. "I am a lower kind of being, and could not so easily sink myself."

"Not by entering into your father's ideas. If a woman really believes herself to be a lower kind of being, she should place herself in subjection: she should be ruled by the thoughts of her father or husband. If not, let her show her power of choosing something better. You must know that your father's principles are greater and worthier than what guides your life. You have no reason but idle fancy and selfish inclination for shirking his teaching and giving your soul up to trifles."

"You are kind enough to say so. But I am not aware that I have ever confided my reasons to you."

"Why, what worth calling a reason could make any mortal hang over this trash? — idiotic immorality dressed up to look fine, with a little bit of doctrine tacked to it, like a hare's foot on a dish, to make believe the mess is not cat's flesh. Look here! 'Est-ce ma faute, si je trouve partout les bornes, si ce qui est fini n'a pour moi aucune valeur?' Yes, sir, distinctly your fault, because you're an ass. Your dunce who can't do his sums always has a taste for the infinite. Sir, do you know what a rhomboid is? Oh no, I don't value these things with limits. 'Cependant, j'aime la monotonie des sentimens de la vie, et si j'avais encore la folie de croire au bonheur —'"

"Oh pray, Mr. Holt, don't go on reading with that dreadful accent; it sets one's teeth on edge." Esther, smarting helplessly under the previous lashes, was relieved by this diversion of criticism.

"There it is!" said Felix, throwing the book on the table, and getting up to walk about. "You are only happy when you can spy a tag or a tassel loose to turn the talk, and get rid of any judgment that must carry grave action after it."

"I think I have borne a great deal of talk without turning it."

"Not enough, Miss Lyon — not all that I came to say. I want you to change. Of course I am a brute to say so. I ought to say you are perfect. Another man would, perhaps. But I say I want you to change."

"How am I to oblige you? By joining the Church?"

"No; but by asking yourself whether life is not as solemn a thing as your father takes it to be — in which you may be either a blessing or a curse to many. You know you have never done that. You don't care to be better than a bird trimming its feathers, and pecking about after what pleases it. You are discontented with the world because you can't get just the small things that suit your pleasure, not because it's a world where myriads of men and women are ground by wrong and misery, and tainted with pollution."

Esther felt her heart swelling with mingled indignation at this liberty, wounded pride at this depreciation, and acute consciousness that she could not contradict what Felix said. He was outrageously ill-bred; but she felt that she should be lowering herself by telling him so, and manifesting her anger; in that way she would be confirming his accusation of a littleness that shrank from severe truth; and, besides, through all her mortification there pierced a sense that this exasperation

of Felix against her was more complimentary than anything in his previous behavior. She had self-command enough to speak with her usual silvery voice.

"Pray go on, Mr. Holt. Relieve yourself of these burning truths. I am sure they must be troublesome to carry unuttered."

"Yes, they are," said Felix, pausing, and standing not far off her. "I can't bear to see you going the way of the foolish women who spoil men's lives. Men can't help loving them, and so they make themselves slaves to the petty desires of petty creatures. That's the way those who might do better spend their lives for naught—get checked in every great effort—toil with brain and limb for things that have no more to do with a manly life than tarts and confectionery. That's what makes women a curse; all life is stunted to suit their littleness. That's why I'll never love, if I can help it; and if I love, I'll bear it, and never marry."

The tumult of feeling in Esther's mind—mortification, anger, the sense of a terrible power over her that Felix seemed to have as his angry words vibrated through her—was getting almost too much for her self-control. She felt her lips quivering; but her pride, which feared nothing so much as the betrayal of her emotion, helped her to a desperate effort. She pinched her own hand hard to overcome her tremor, and said, in a tone of scorn,—

"I ought to be very much obliged to you for giving me your confidence so freely."

"Ah! now you are offended with me, and disgusted with me. I expected it would be so. A woman doesn't like a man who tells her the truth."

"I think you boast a little too much of your truth-telling, Mr. Holt," said Esther, flashing out at last. "That virtue is apt to be easy to people when they only wound others and not themselves. Telling the truth often means no more than taking a liberty."

"Yes, I suppose I should have been taking a liberty if I had tried to drag you back by the skirt when I saw you running into a pit."

"You should really found a sect. Preaching is your vocation. It is a pity you should ever have an audience of only one."

"I see; I have made a fool of myself. I thought you had a more generous mind—that you might be kindled to a better ambition. But I've set your vanity aflame—nothing else."

"Good-by," said Esther, not looking at him. He did not open the door immediately. He seemed to be adjusting his cap and pulling it down. Esther longed to be able to throw a lasso round him and compel him to stay, that she might say what she chose to him; her very anger made this departure irritating, especially as he had the last word, and that a very bitter one. But soon the latch was lifted and the door closed behind him. She ran up to her bedroom and burst into tears. Poor maiden! There was a strange contradiction of impulses in her mind in those first moments. She could not bear that Felix should not respect her, yet she could not bear that he should see her bend before his denunciation. She revolted against his assumption of superiority, yet she felt herself in a new kind of subjection to him. He was ill-bred, he was rude, he had taken an unwarrantable liberty; yet his indignant words were a tribute to her: he thought she was worth more pains than the women of whom he took no notice. It was excessively impertinent in him to tell her of his resolving not to love — not to marry — as if she cared about that; as if he thought himself likely to inspire an affection that would incline any woman to marry him after such eccentric steps as he had taken. Had he ever for a moment imagined that she had thought of him in the light of a man who would make love to her? . . . But did he love her one little bit, and was that the reason why he wanted her to change? Esther felt less angry at that form of freedom; though she was quite sure that she did not love him, and that she could never love any one who was so much of a pedagogue and a master, to say nothing of his oddities. But he wanted her to change. For the first time in her life Esther felt herself seriously shaken in her self-contentment. She knew there was a mind to which she appeared trivial, narrow, selfish. Every word Felix had said to her seemed to have burned itself into her memory. She felt as if she should for evermore be haunted by self-criticism, and never do anything to satisfy those fancies on which she had simply piqued herself before without being dogged by inward questions. Her father's desire for her conversion had never moved her; she saw that he adored her all the while, and he never checked her unregenerate acts as if they degraded her on earth, but only mourned over them as unfitting her for heaven. Unfitness for heaven (spoken of as "Jerusalem" and "glory"), the prayers of a good little father, whose thoughts and motives seemed to her like the "Life of Dr. Doddridge," which she was content to

leave unread, did not attack her self-respect and self-satisfaction. But now she had been stung — stung even into a new consciousness concerning her father. Was it true that his life was so much worthier than her own? She could not change for anything Felix said, but she told herself he was mistaken if he supposed her incapable of generous thoughts.

She heard her father coming into the house. She dried her tears, tried to recover herself hurriedly, and went down to him.

"You want your tea, father; how your forehead burns!" she said gently, kissing his brow, and then putting her cool hand on it.

Mr. Lyon felt a little surprise; such spontaneous tenderness was not quite common with her; it reminded him of her mother.

"My sweet child," he said gratefully, thinking with wonder of the treasures still left in our fallen nature.

CHAPTER XI.

Truth is the precious harvest of the earth.
But once, when harvest waved upon a land,
The noisome cankerworm and caterpillar,
Locusts, and all the swarming foul-born broods,
Fastened upon it with swift, greedy jaws,
And turned the harvest into pestilence,
Until men said, What profits it to sow?

FELIX was going to Sproxton that Sunday afternoon. He always enjoyed his walk to that outlying hamlet; it took him (by a short cut) through a corner of Sir Maximus Debarry's park; then across a piece of common, broken here and there into red ridges below dark masses of furze; and for the rest of the way alongside the canal, where the Sunday peacefulness that seemed to rest on the bordering meadows and pastures was hardly broken if a horse pulled into sight along the towing-path, and a boat, with a little curl of blue smoke issuing from its tin chimney, came slowly gliding behind. Felix retained something of his boyish impression that the days in a canal-boat were all like Sundays; but the horse, if it had been put to him, would probably have preferred a more Judaic or Scotch rigor with regard to canal-boats, or at least that the Sunday towing should be done by asses, as a lower order.

This canal was only a branch of the grand trunk, and ended among the coal-pits, where Felix, crossing a network of black tram-roads, soon came to his destination — that public institute of Sproxtton, known to its frequenters chiefly as Chubb's, but less familiarly as the Sugar Loaf, or the New Pits; this last being the name for the more modern and lively nucleus of the Sproxtton hamlet. The other nucleus, known as the Old Pits, also supported its "public," but it had something of the forlorn air of an abandoned capital; and the company at the Blue Cow was of an inferior kind — equal, of course, in the fundamental attributes of humanity, such as desire for beer, but not equal in ability to pay for it.

When Felix arrived, the great Chubb was standing at the door. Mr. Chubb was a remarkable publican; none of your stock Bonifaces, red, bloated, jolly, and joking. He was thin and sallow, and was never, as his constant guests observed, seen to be the worse (or the better) for liquor; indeed, as among soldiers an eminent general was held to have a charmed life, Chubb was held by the members of the Benefit Club to have a charmed sobriety, a vigilance over his own interest that resisted all narcotics. His very dreams, as stated by himself, had a method in them beyond the waking thoughts of other men. Pharaoh's dream, he observed, was nothing to them; and, as lying so much out of ordinary experience, they were held particularly suitable for narration on Sunday evenings, when the listening colliers, well washed and in their best coats, shook their heads with a sense of that peculiar edification which belongs to the inexplicable. Mr. Chubb's reasons for becoming landlord of the Sugar Loaf were founded on the severest calculation. Having an active mind, and being averse to bodily labor, he had thoroughly considered what calling would yield him the best livelihood with the least possible exertion, and in that sort of line he had seen that a "public" amongst miners who earned high wages was a fine opening. He had prospered according to the merits of such judicious calculation, was already a forty-shilling free-holder, and was conscious of a vote for the county. He was not one of those mean-spirited men who found the franchise embarrassing, and would rather have been without it: he regarded his vote as part of his investment, and meant to make the best of it. He called himself a straight-forward man, and at suitable moments expressed his views freely; in fact, he was known to have one fundamental division for all opinion — "my idee" and "humbug."

When Felix approached, Mr. Chubb was standing, as usual, with his hands nervously busy in his pockets, his eyes glancing round with a detective expression at the black landscape, and his lipless mouth compressed yet in constant movement. On a superficial view it might be supposed that so eager-seeming a personality was unsuited to the publican's business; but in fact it was a great provocative to drinking. Like the shrill biting talk of a vixenish wife, it would have compelled you to "take a little something" by way of dulling your sensibility.

Hitherto, notwithstanding Felix drank so little ale, the publican had treated him with high civility. The coming election was a great opportunity for applying his political "idee," which was, that society existed for the sake of the individual, and that the name of that individual was Chubb. Now, from a conjunction of absurd circumstances inconsistent with that idea, it happened that Sproxton had been hitherto somewhat neglected in the canvass. The head member of the Company that worked the mines was Mr. Peter Garstin, and the same company received the rent for the Sugar Loaf. Hence, as the person who had the most power of annoying Mr. Chubb, and being of detriment to him, Mr. Garstin was naturally the candidate for whom he had reserved his vote. But where there is this intention of ultimately gratifying a gentleman by voting for him in an open British manner on the day of the poll, a man, whether Publican or Pharisee (Mr. Chubb used this generic classification of mankind as one that was sanctioned by Scripture), is all the freer in his relations with those deluded persons who take him for what he is not, and imagine him to be a waverer. But for some time opportunity had seemed barren. There were but three dubious votes besides Mr. Chubb's in the small district of which the Sugar Loaf could be regarded as the centre of intelligence and inspiration: the colliers, of course, had no votes, and did not need political conversion; consequently, the interests of Sproxton had only been tacitly cherished in the breasts of candidates. But ever since it had been known that a Radical candidate was in the field, that in consequence of this Mr. Debarry had coalesced with Mr. Garstin, and that Sir James Clement, the poor baronet, had retired, Mr. Chubb had been occupied with the most ingenious mental combinations in order to ascertain what possibilities of profit to the Sugar Loaf might lie in this altered state of the canvass.

He had a cousin in another county, also a publican, but in a larger way, and resident in a borough, and from him Mr.

Chubb had gathered more detailed political information than he could find in the Loamshire newspapers. He was now enlightened enough to know that there was a way of using voteless miners and navvies at Nominations and Elections. He approved of that; it entered into his political "idee;" and indeed he would have been for extending the franchise to this class—at least in Sproxton. If any one had observed that you must draw a line somewhere, Mr. Chubb would have concurred at once, and would have given permission to draw it at a radius of two miles from his own tap.

From the first Sunday evening when Felix had appeared at the Sugar Loaf, Mr. Chubb had made up his mind that this 'cute man who kept himself sober was an electioneering agent. That he was hired for some purpose or other there was not a doubt; a man didn't come and drink nothing without a good reason. In proportion as Felix's purpose was not obvious to Chubb's mind, it must be deep; and this growing conviction had even led the publican on the last Sunday evening privately to urge his mysterious visitor to let a little ale be chalked up for him—it was of no consequence. Felix knew his man, and had taken care not to betray too soon that his real object was so to win the ear of the best fellows about him as to induce them to meet him on a Saturday evening in the room where Mr. Lyon, or one of his deacons, habitually held his Wednesday preachings. Only women and children, three old men, a journeyman tailor, and a consumptive youth, attended those preachings; not a collier had been won from the strong ale of the Sugar Loaf, not even a navvy from the muddier drink of the Blue Cow. Felix was sanguine; he saw some pleasant faces among the miners when they were washed on Sundays; they might be taught to spend their wages better. At all events, he was going to try: he had great confidence in his powers of appeal, and it was quite true that he never spoke without arresting attention. There was nothing better than a dame school in the hamlet; he thought that if he could move the fathers, whose blackened week-day persons and flannel caps, ornamented with tallow candles by way of plume, were a badge of hard labor for which he had a more sympathetic fibre than for any ribbon in the button-hole—if he could move these men to save something from their drink and pay a schoolmaster for their boys, a greater service would be done them than if Mr. Garstin and his company were persuaded to establish a school.

"I'll lay hold of them by their fatherhood," said Felix; "I'll

take one of their little fellows and set him in the midst. Till they can show there's something they love better than swilling themselves with ale, extension of the suffrage can never mean anything for them but extension of boozing. One must begin somewhere: I'll begin at what is under my nose. I'll begin at Sproxton. That's what a man would do if he had a red-hot superstition. Can't one work for sober truth as hard as for megrims?"

Felix Holt had his illusions, like other young men, though they were not of a fashionable sort; referring neither to the impression his costume and horsemanship might make on beholders, nor to the ease with which he would pay the Jews when he gave a loose to his talents and applied himself to work. He had fixed his choice on a certain Mike Brindle (not that Brindle was his real name — each collier had his *sobriquet*) as the man whom he would induce to walk part of the way home with him this very evening, and get to invite some of his comrades for the next Saturday. Brindle was one of the head miners; he had a bright good-natured face, and had given especial attention to certain performances with a magnet which Felix carried in his pocket.

Mr. Chubb, who had also his illusions, smiled graciously as the enigmatic customer came up to the door-step.

"Well, sir, Sunday seems to be your day: I begin to look for you on a Sunday now."

"Yes, I'm a working man; Sunday is my holiday," said Felix, pausing at the door since the host seemed to expect this.

"Ah, sir, there's many ways of working. I look at it you're one of those as work with your brains. That's what I do myself."

"One may do a good deal of that and work with one's hands too."

"Ah, sir," said Mr. Chubb, with a certain bitterness in his smile, "I've that sort of head that I've often wished I was stupider. I use things up, sir; I see into things a deal too quick. I eat my dinner, as you may say, at breakfast-time. That's why I hardly ever smoke a pipe. No sooner do I stick a pipe in my mouth than I puff and puff till it's gone before other folks' are well lit; and then, where am I? I might as well have let it alone. In this world it's better not to be too quick. But you know what it is, sir."

"Not I," said Felix, rubbing the back of his head, with a grimace. "I generally feel myself rather a blockhead. The

world's a largish place, and I haven't turned everything inside out yet."

"Ah, that's your deepness. I think we understand one another. And about this here election, I lay two to one we should agree if we was to come to talk about it."

"Ah!" said Felix, with an air of caution.

"You're none of a Tory, eh, sir? You won't go to vote for Debarry? That was what I said at the very first go-off. Says I, he's no Tory. I think I was right, sir — eh?"

"Certainly; I'm no Tory."

"No, no, you don't catch me wrong in a hurry. Well, between you and me, I care no more for the Debarrys than I care for Johnny Groats. I live on none o' their land, and not a pot's-worth did they ever send to the Sugar Loaf. I'm not frightened at the Debarrys: there's no man more independent than me. I'll plump or I'll split for them as treat me the handsomest and are the most of what I call gentlemen; that's my idee. And in the way of hacting for any man, them are fools that don't employ me."

We mortals sometimes cut a pitiable figure in our attempts at display. We may be sure of our own merits, yet fatally ignorant of the point of view from which we are regarded by our neighbor. Our fine patterns in tattooing may be far from throwing him into a swoon of admiration, though we turn ourselves all round to show them. Thus it was with Mr. Chubb.

"Yes," said Felix, dryly; "I should think there are some sorts of work for which you are just fitted."

"Ah, you see that? Well, we understand one another. You're no Tory; no more am I. And if I'd got four hands to show at a nomination, the Debarrys shouldn't have one of 'em. My idee is, there's a deal too much of their scutchins and their moniments in Treby Church. What's their scutchins mean? They're a sign with little liquor behind 'em; that's how I take it. There's nobody can give account of 'em as I ever heard."

Mr. Chubb was hindered from further explaining his views as to the historical element in society by the arrival of new guests, who approached in two groups. The foremost group consisted of well-known colliers, in their good Sunday beavers and colored handkerchiefs serving as cravats, with the long ends floating. The second group was a more unusual one, and caused Mr. Chubb to compress his mouth and agitate the muscles about it in rather an excited manner.

First came a smartly-dressed personage on horseback, with

a conspicuous expansive shirt-front and figured satin stock. He was a stout man, and gave a strong sense of broadcloth. A wild idea shot through Mr. Chubb's brain: could this grand visitor be Harold Transome? Excuse him: he had been given to understand by his cousin from the distant borough that a Radical candidate in the condescension of canvassing had even gone the length of eating bread-and-treacle with the children of an honest freeman, and declaring his preference for that simple fare. Mr. Chubb's notion of a Radical was that he was a new and agreeable kind of lick-spittle who fawned on the poor instead of on the rich, and so was likely to send customers to a "public;" so that he argued well enough from the premises at his command.

The mounted man of broadcloth had followers: several shabby-looking men, and Sproxton boys of all sizes, whose curiosity had been stimulated by unexpected largesse. A stranger on horseback scattering halfpence on a Sunday was so unprecedented that there was no knowing what he might do next; and the smallest hindmost fellows in seal-skin caps were not without hope that an entirely new order of things had set in.

Every one waited outside for the stranger to dismount, and Mr. Chubb advanced to take the bridle.

"Well, Mr. Chubb," were the first words when the great man was safely out of the saddle, "I've often heard of your fine tap, and I'm come to taste it."

"Walk in, sir — pray walk in," said Mr. Chubb, giving the horse to the stable-boy. "I shall be proud to draw for you. If anybody's been praising me, I think my ale will back him."

All entered in the rear of the stranger except the boys, who peeped in at the window.

"Won't you please to walk into the parlor, sir?" said Chubb, obsequiously.

"No, no, I'll sit down here. This is what I like to see," said the stranger, looking round at the colliers, who eyed him rather shyly — "a bright hearth where working men can enjoy themselves. However, I'll step into the other room for three minutes, just to speak half a dozen words with you."

Mr. Chubb threw open the parlor door, and then stepping back, took the opportunity of saying, in a low tone, to Felix, "Do you know this gentleman?"

"Not I; no."

Mr. Chubb's opinion of Felix Holt sank from that moment. The parlor door was closed, but no one sat down or ordered beer

"I say, master," said Mike Brindle, going up to Felix, "don't you think that's one o' the 'lection men?"

"Very likely."

"I heared a chap say they're up and down everywhere," said Brindle; "and now's the time, they say, when a man can get beer for nothing."

"Ay, that's sin' the Reform," said a big, red-whiskered man, called Dredge. "That's brought the 'lections and the drink into these parts; for afore that, it was all kep up the Lord knows wheer."

"Well, but the Reform's niver come anigh Sprox'on," said a gray-haired but stalwart man called Old Sleek. "I don't believe nothing about'n, I don't."

"Don't you?" said Brindle, with some contempt. "Well, I do. There's folks won't believe beyond the end o' their own pickaxes. You can't drive nothing into 'em, not if you split their skulls. I know for certain sure, from a chap in the cartin' way, as he's got money and drink too, only for hollerin'. Eh, master, what do *you* say?" Brindle ended, turning with some deference to Felix.

"Should you like to know all about the Reform?" said Felix, using his opportunity. "If you would, I can tell you."

"Ay, ay—tell's; you know, I'll be bound," said several voices at once.

"Ah, but it will take some little time. And we must be quiet. The cleverest of you — those who are looked up to in the Club — must come and meet me at Peggy Button's cottage next Saturday, at seven o'clock, after dark. And, Brindle, you must bring that little yellow-haired lad of yours. And anybody that's got a little boy — a very little fellow, who won't understand what is said — may bring him. But you must keep it close, you know. We don't want fools there. But everybody who hears me may come. I shall be at Peggy Button's."

"Why, that's where the Wednesday preachin' is," said Dredge. "I've been aforced to give my wife a black eye to hinder her from going to the preachin'. Lors-a-massy, she thinks she knows better nor me, and I can't make head nor tail of her talk."

"Why can't you let the woman alone?" said Brindle, with some disgust. "I'd be ashamed to beat a poor crawling thing 'cause she likes preaching."

"No more I did beat her afore, not if she scrat' me," said Dredge, in vindication; "but if she jabbers at me, I can't

abide it. Howsomever, I'll bring my Jack to Peggy's o' Saturday. His mother shall wash him. He is but four year old, and he'll swear and square at me a good un, if I set him on."

"There you go blatherin'," said Brindle, intending a mild rebuke.

This dialogue, which was in danger of becoming too personal, was interrupted by the reopening of the parlor door, and the reappearance of the impressive stranger with Mr. Chubb, whose countenance seemed unusually radiant.

"Sit you down here, Mr. Johnson," said Chubb, moving an arm-chair. "This gentleman is kind enough to treat the company," he added, looking round, "and what's more, he'll take a cup with 'em; and I think there's no man but what'll say that's a honor."

The company had nothing equivalent to a "hear, hear," at command, but they perhaps felt the more, as they seated themselves with an expectation unvented by utterance. There was a general satisfactory sense that the hitherto shadowy Reform had at length come to Sproxtton in a good round shape, with broadcloth and pockets. Felix did not intend to accept the treating, but he chose to stay and hear, taking his pint as usual.

"Capital ale, capital ale," said Mr. Johnson, as he set down his glass, speaking in a quick, smooth treble. "Now," he went on, with a certain pathos in his voice, looking at Mr. Chubb, who sat opposite, "there's some satisfaction to me in finding an establishment like this at the Pits. For what would higher wages do for the working man if he couldn't get a good article for his money? Why, gentlemen" — here he looked round — "I've been into ale-houses where I've seen a fine fellow of a miner or a stone-cutter come in and have to lay down money for beer that I should be sorry to give to my pigs!" Here Mr. Johnson leaned forward with squared elbows, hands placed on his knees, and a defiant shake of the head.

"Aw, like at the Blue Cow," fell in the irrepressible Dredge, in a deep bass; but he was rebuked by a severe nudge from Brindle.

"Yes, yes, you know what it is, my friend," said Mr. Johnson, looking at Dredge, and restoring his self-satisfaction. "But it won't last much longer, that's one good thing. Bad liquor will be swept away with other bad articles. Trade will prosper — and what's trade now without steam? and what is steam without coal? And mark you this, gentlemen — there's no man and no government can make coal"

A brief loud "Haw, haw," showed that this fact was appreciated.

"Nor freeston' nayther," said a wide-mouthed wiry man called Gills, who wished for an exhaustive treatment of the subject, being a stone-cutter.

"Nor freestone, as you say ; else, I think, if coal could be made aboveground, honest fellows who are the pith of our population would not have to bend their backs and sweat in a pit six days out of the seven. No, no : I say, as this country prospers it has more and more need of you, sirs. It can do without a pack of lazy lords and ladies, but it can never do without brave colliers. And the country *will* prosper. I pledge you my word, sirs, this country will rise to the tip-top of everything, and there isn't a man in it but what shall have his joint in the pot, and his spare money jingling in his pocket, if we only exert ourselves to send the right men to Parliament — men who will speak up for the collier, and the stone-cutter, and the navy" (Mr. Johnson waved his hand liberally), "and will stand no nonsense. This is a crisis, and we must exert ourselves. We've got Reform, gentlemen, but now the thing is to make Reform work. It's a crisis — I pledge you my word it's a crisis."

Mr. Johnson threw himself back as if from the concussion of that great noun. He did not suppose that one of his audience knew what a crisis meant ; but he had large experience in the effect of uncomprehended words ; and in this case the colliers were thrown into a state of conviction concerning they did not know what, which was a fine preparation for "hitting out," or any other act carrying a due sequence to such a conviction.

Felix felt himself in danger of getting into a rage. There is hardly any mental misery worse than that of having our own serious phrases, our own rooted beliefs, caricatured by a charlatan or a hireling. He began to feel the sharp lower edge of his tin pint-measure, and to think it a tempting missile.

Mr. Johnson certainly had some qualifications as an orator. After this impressive pause he leaned forward again, and said, in a lowered tone, looking round, —

"I think you all know the good news."

There was a movement of shoe-soles on the quarried floor, and a scrape of some chair legs, but no other answer.

"The good news I mean is, that a first-rate man, Mr. Transome of Transome Court, has offered himself to represent you in

Parliament, sirs. I say you in particular, for what he has at heart is the welfare of the working man — of the brave fellows that wield the pickaxe, and the saw, and the hammer. He's rich — has more money than Garstin — but he doesn't want to keep it to himself. What he wants is, to make a good use of it, gentlemen. He's come back from foreign parts with his pockets full of gold. He could buy up the Debarrys if they were worth buying, but he's got something better to do with his money. He means to use it for the good of the working men in these parts. I know there are some men who put up for Parliament and talk a little too big. They may say they want to befriend the colliers, for example. But I should like to put a question to them. I should like to ask them, 'What colliers?' There are colliers up at Newcastle, and there are colliers down in Wales. Will it do any good to honest Tom, who is hungry in Sproxton, to hear that Jack at Newcastle has his bellyful of beef and pudding?"

"It ought to do him good," Felix burst in, with his loud abrupt voice, in odd contrast with glib Mr. Johnson's. "If he knows it's a bad thing to be hungry and not have enough to eat, he ought to be glad that another fellow, who is not idle, is not suffering in the same way."

Every one was startled. The audience was much impressed with the grandeur, the knowledge, and the power of Mr. Johnson. His brilliant promises confirmed the impression that Reform had at length reached the New Pits; and Reform, if it were good for anything, must at last resolve itself into spare money — meaning "sport" and drink, and keeping away from work for several days in the week. These "brave" men of Sproxton liked Felix as one of themselves, only much more knowing — as a working man who had seen many distant parts, but who must be very poor, since he never drank more than a pint or so. They were quite inclined to hear what he had got to say on another occasion, but they were rather irritated by his interruption at the present moment. Mr. Johnson was annoyed, but he spoke with the same glib quietness as before, though with an expression of contempt.

"I call it a poor-spirited thing to take up a man's straightforward words and twist them. What I meant to say was plain enough — that no man can be saved from starving by looking on while others eat. I think that's common-sense, eh, sirs?"

There was again an approving "Haw, haw." To hear anything said, and understand it, was a stimulus that had the effect of wit. Mr. Chubb cast a suspicious and viperous glance

at Felix, who felt that he had been a simpleton for his pains.

"Well, then," continued Mr. Johnson, "I suppose I may go on. But if there is any one here better able to inform the company than I am, I give way—I give way."

"Sir," said Mr. Chubb, magisterially, "no man shall take the words out of *your* mouth in this house. And," he added, looking pointedly at Felix, "company that's got no more orders to give, and wants to turn up rusty to them that has, had better be making room than filling it. Love an' 'armony's the word on our Club's flag, an' love an' 'armony's the meaning of 'The Sugar Loaf, William Chubb.' Folks of a different mind had better seek another house of call."

"Very good," said Felix, laying down his money and taking his cap. "I'm going." He saw clearly enough that if he said more, there would be a disturbance which could have no desirable end.

When the door had closed behind him, Mr. Johnson said, "What is that person's name?"

"Does anybody know it?" said Mr. Chubb.

A few noes were heard.

"I've heard him speak like a downright Reformer, else I should have looked a little sharper after him. But you may see he's nothing partic'lar."

"It looks rather bad that no one knows his name," said Mr. Johnson. "He's most likely a Tory in disguise—a Tory spy. You must be careful, sirs, of men who come to you and say they're Radicals, and yet do nothing for you. They'll stuff you with words—no lack of words—but words are wind. Now, a man like Transome comes forward and says to the working men of this country: 'Here I am, ready to serve you and to speak for you in Parliament, and to get the laws made all right for you; and in the meanwhile, if there's any of you who are my neighbors who want a day's holiday, or a cup to drink with friends, or a copy of the King's likeness—why, I'm your man. I'm not a paper handbill—all words and no substance—nor a man with land and nothing else; I've got bags of gold as well as land.' I think you know what I mean by the King's likeness?"

Here Mr. Johnson took a half-crown out of his pocket and held the head towards the company.

"Well, sirs, there are some men who like to keep this pretty picture a great deal too much to themselves. I don't know whether I'm right, but I think I've heard of such a one not a

hundred miles from here. I think his name was Spratt, and he managed some company's coal-pits."

"Haw, haw! Spratt — Spratt's his name," was rolled forth to an accompaniment of scraping shoe-soles.

"A screwing fellow, by what I understand — a domineering fellow — who would expect men to do as he liked without paying them for it. I think there's not an honest men who wouldn't like to disappoint such an upstart."

There was a murmur which was interpreted by Mr. Chubb. "I'll answer for 'em, sir."

"Now, listen to me. Here's Garstin: he's one of the Company you work under. What's Garstin to you? who sees him? and when they do see him they see a thin miserly fellow who keeps his pockets buttoned. He calls himself a Whig, yet he'll split votes with a Tory — he'll drive with the Debarrys. Now, gentlemen, if I said I'd got a vote; and anybody asked me what I should do with it, I should say, 'I'll plump for Transome.' You've got no votes, and that's a shame. But you *will* have some day, if such men as Transome are returned; and then you'll be on a level with the first gentleman in the land, and if he wants to sit in Parliament, he must take off his hat and ask your leave. But though you haven't got a vote you can give a cheer for the right man, and Transome's not a man like Garstin; if you lost a day's wages by giving a cheer for Transome, he'll make you amends. That's the way a man who has no vote can yet serve himself and his country; he can lift up his hand and shout 'Transome for ever!' — 'Hurray for Transome!' Let the working men — let colliers and navvies and stone-cutters, who between you and me have a good deal too much the worst of it, as things are now — let them join together and give their hands and voices for the right man, and they'll make the great people shake in their shoes a little; and when you shout for Transome, remember you shout for more wages, and more of your rights, and you shout to get rid of rats and *sprats* and such small animals, who are the tools the rich make use of to squeeze the blood out of the poor man."

"I wish there'd be a row — I'd pommel him," said Dredge, who was generally felt to be speaking to the question.

"No, no, my friend — there you're a little wrong. No pommelling — no striking first. There you have the law and the constable against you. A little rolling in the dust and knocking hats off, a little pelting with soft things that'll stick and not bruise — all that doesn't spoil the fun. If a man is to

“speak when you don’t like to hear him, it is but fair you should give him something he doesn’t like in return. And the same if he’s got a vote and doesn’t use it for the good of the country; I see no harm in splitting his coat in a quiet way. A man must be taught what’s right if he doesn’t know it. But no kicks, no knocking down, no pommelling.”

“It ’ud be good fun, though, if so-*be*,” said Old Sleek, allowing himself an imaginative pleasure.

“Well, well, if a Spratt wants you to say Garstin, it’s some pleasure to think you can say Transome. Now, my notion is this. You are men who can put two and two together—I don’t know a more solid lot of fellows than you are; and what I say is, let the honest men in this country who’ve got no vote show themselves in a body when they have the chance. Why, sirs, for every Tory sneak that’s got a vote, there’s fifty-five fellows who must stand by and be expected to hold their tongues. But I say, let ’em hiss the sneaks, let ’em groan at the sneaks, and the sneaks will be ashamed of themselves. The men who’ve got votes don’t know how to use them. There’s many a fool with a vote, who is not sure in his mind whether he shall poll, say for Debarry, or Garstin, or Transome—whether he’ll plump or whether he’ll split; a straw will turn him. Let him know your mind if he doesn’t know his own. What’s the reason Debarry gets returned? Because people are frightened at the Debarrys. What’s that to you? You don’t care for the Debarrys. If people are frightened at the Tories, we’ll turn round and frighten *them*. You know what a Tory is—one who wants to drive the working men as he’d drive cattle. That’s what a Tory is; and a Whig is no better, if he’s like Garstin. A Whig wants to knock the Tory down and get the whip, that’s all. But Transome’s neither Whig nor Tory; he’s the working man’s friend, the collier’s friend, the friend of the honest navvy. And if he gets into Parliament, let me tell you, it will be the better for you. I don’t say it will be the better for overlookers and screws, and rats and *sprats*; but it will be the better for every good fellow who takes his pot at the Sugar Loaf.”

Mr. Johnson’s exertions for the political education of the Sproxton men did not stop here, which was the more disinterested in him as he did not expect to see them again, and could only set on foot an organization by which their instruction could be continued without him. In this he was quite successful. A man known among the “*butties*” as Pack, who had already been mentioned by Mr. Chubb, presently

joined the party, and had a private audience of Mr. Johnson, that he might be instituted as the "shepherd" of this new flock.

"That's a right down genelman," said Pack, as he took the seat vacated by the orator, who had ridden away.

"What's his trade, think you?" said Gills, the wiry stone-cutter.

"Trade?" said Mr. Chubb. "He's one of the top-sawyers of the country. He works with his head, you may see that."

"Let's have our pipes, then," said Old Sleek; "I'm pretty well tired o' jaw."

"So am I," said Dredge. "It's wriggling work — like fol-lering a stoat. It makes a man dry. I'd as lief hear preach-ing, on'y there's nought to be got by't. I shouldn't know which end I stood on if it wasn't for the tickets and the treatin'."

CHAPTER XII.

"Oh, sir, 'twas that mixture of spite and over-fed merriment which passes for humor with the vulgar. In their fun they have much resemblance to a turkey-cock. It has a cruel beak, and a silly iteration of ugly sounds; it spreads its tail in self-glorification, but shows you the wrong side of that ornament — liking admiration, but knowing not what is admirable."

THIS Sunday evening, which promised to be so memorable in the experience of the Sproxtton miners, had its drama also for those unsatisfactory objects to Mr. Johnson's moral sense, the Debarrys. Certain incidents occurring at Treby Manor caused an excitement there which spread from the dining-room to the stables; but no one underwent such agitating transi-tions of feeling as Mr. Scales. At six o'clock that superior butler was chuckling in triumph at having played a fine and original practical joke on his rival Mr. Christian. Some two hours after that time, he was frightened, sorry, and even meek; he was on the brink of a humiliating confession; his cheeks were almost livid; his hair was flattened for want of due attention from his fingers; and the fine roll of his whiskers, which was too firm to give way, seemed only a sad reminis-cence of past splendor and felicity. His sorrow came about in this wise.

After service on that Sunday morning, Mr. Philip Debarry had left the rest of the family to go home in the carriage, and had remained at the Rectory to lunch with his uncle Augustus, that he might consult him touching some letters of importance. He had returned the letters to his pocket-book, but had not returned the book to his pocket, and he finally

walked away leaving the enclosure of private papers and bank-notes on his uncle's *escritoire*. After his arrival at home he was reminded of his omission, and immediately despatched Christian with a note begging his uncle to seal up the pocket-book and send it by the bearer. This commission, which was given between three and four o'clock, happened to be very unwelcome to the courier. The fact was that Mr. Christian, who had been remarkable through life for that power of adapting himself to circumstances which enables a man to fall safely on all-fours in the most hurried expulsions and escapes, was not exempt from bodily suffering — a circumstance to which there is no known way of adapting one's self so as to be perfectly comfortable under it, or to push it off onto other people's shoulders. He did what he could: he took doses of opium when he had an access of nervous pains, and he consoled himself as to future possibilities by thinking that if the pains ever became intolerably frequent a considerable increase in the dose might put an end to them altogether. He was neither Cato nor Hamlet, and though he had learned their soliloquies at his first boarding-school, he would probably have increased his dose without reciting those master-pieces. Next to the pain itself he disliked that any one should know of it: defective health diminished a man's market value; he did not like to be the object of the sort of pity he himself gave to a poor devil who was forced to make a wry face or "give in" altogether.

He had felt it expedient to take a slight dose this afternoon, and still he was not altogether relieved at the time he set off to the Rectory. On returning with the valuable case safely deposited in his hind pocket, he felt increasing bodily uneasiness, and took another dose. Thinking it likely that he looked rather pitiable, he chose not to proceed to the house by the carriage-road. The servants often walked in the park on a Sunday, and he wished to avoid any meeting. He would make a circuit, get into the house privately, and after delivering his pocket to Mr. Debarry, shut himself up till the ringing of the half-hour bell. But when he reached an elbowed seat under some sycamores, he felt so ill at ease that he yielded to the temptation of throwing himself on it to rest a little. He looked at his watch: it was but five; he had done his errand quickly hitherto, and Mr. Debarry had not urged haste. But in less than ten minutes he was in a sound sleep. Certain conditions of his system had determined a stronger effect than usual from the opium.

As he had expected, there were servants strolling in the park, but they did not all choose the most frequented part. Mr. Scales, in pursuit of a slight flirtation with the younger lady's maid, had preferred a more sequestered walk in the company of that agreeable nymph. And it happened to be this pair, of all others, who alighted on the sleeping Christian — a sight which at the very first moment caused Mr. Scales a vague pleasure as at an incident that must lead to something clever on his part. To play a trick, and make some one or other look foolish, was held the most pointed form of wit throughout the back regions of the Manor, and served as a constant substitute for theatrical entertainment: what the farce wanted in costume or "make up" it gained in the reality of the mortification which excited the general laughter. And lo! here was the offensive, the exasperatingly cool and superior, Christian caught comparatively helpless, with his head hanging on his shoulder, and one coat-tail hanging out heavily below the elbow of the rustic seat. It was this coat-tail which served as a suggestion to Mr. Scales's genius. Putting his finger up in warning to Mrs. Cherry, and saying, "Hush — be quiet — I see a fine bit of fun" — he took a knife from his pocket, stepped behind the unconscious Christian, and quickly cut off the pendent coat-tail. Scales knew nothing of the errand to the Rectory; and as he noticed that there was something in the pocket, thought it was probably a large cigar-case. So much the better — he had no time to pause. He threw the coat-tail as far as he could, and noticed that it fell among the elms under which they had been walking. Then, beckoning to Mrs. Cherry, he hurried away with her towards the more open part of the park, not daring to explode in laughter until it was safe from the chance of waking the sleeper. And then the vision of the graceful well-appointed Mr. Christian, who sneered at Scales about his "get up," having to walk back to the house with only one tail to his coat, was a source of so much enjoyment to the butler, that the fair Cherry began to be quite jealous of the joke. Still she admitted that it really was funny, tittered intermittently, and pledged herself to secrecy. Mr. Scales explained to her that Christian would try to creep in unobserved, but that this must be made impossible; and he requested her to imagine the figure this interloping fellow would cut when everybody was asking what had happened. "Hallo, Christian! where's your coat-tail?" would become a proverb at the Manor, where jokes kept remarkably well without the aid of salt; and Mr. Chris-

tian's comb would be cut so effectually that it would take a long time to grow again. Exit Scales, laughing, and presenting a fine example of dramatic irony to any one in the secret of Fate.

When Christian awoke, he was shocked to find himself in the twilight. He started up, shook himself, missed something, and soon became aware what it was he missed. He did not doubt that he had been robbed, and he at once foresaw that the consequences would be highly unpleasant. In no way could the cause of the accident be so represented to Mr. Philip Debarry as to prevent him from viewing his hitherto unimpeachable factotum in a new and unfavorable light. And though Mr. Christian did not regard his present position as brilliant, he did not see his way to anything better. A man nearly fifty who is not always quite well is seldom ardently hopeful: he is aware that this is a world in which merit is often overlooked. With the idea of robbery in full possession of his mind, to peer about and search in the dimness, even if it had occurred to him, would have seemed a preposterous waste of time and energy. He knew it was likely that Mr. Debarry's pocket-book had important and valuable contents, and that he should deepen his offence by deferring his announcement of the unfortunate fact. He hastened back to the house, relieved by the obscurity from that mortification of his vanity on which the butler had counted. Indeed, to Scales himself the affair had already begun to appear less thoroughly jocose than he had anticipated. For he observed that Christian's non-appearance before dinner had caused Mr. Debarry some consternation; and he had gathered that the courier had been sent on a commission to the Rectory. "My uncle must have detained him for some reason or other," he heard Mr. Philip say; "but it is odd. If he were less trusty about commissions, or had ever seemed to drink too much, I should be uneasy." Altogether the affair was not taking the turn Mr. Scales had intended. At last, when dinner had been removed, and the butler's chief duties were at an end, it was understood that Christian had entered without his coat-tail, looking serious and even agitated; that he had asked leave at once to speak to Mr. Debarry; and that he was even then in parley with the gentlemen in the dining-room. Scales was in alarm; it must have been some property of Mr. Debarry's that had weighted the pocket. He took a lantern, got a groom to accompany him with another lantern, and with the utmost practicable speed reached the fatal spot in the park. He

searched under the elms — he was certain that the pocket had fallen there — and he found the pocket; but he found it empty, and, in spite of further search, did not find the contents, though he had at first consoled himself with thinking that they had fallen out, and would be lying not far off. He returned with the lanterns and the coat-tail and a most uncomfortable consciousness in that great seat of a butler's emotion, the stomach. He had no sooner re-entered than he was met by Mrs. Cherry, pale and anxious, who drew him aside to say that if he didn't tell everything she would; that the constables were to be sent for; that there had been no end of bank-notes and letters and things in Mr. Debarry's pocket-book, which Christian was carrying in that very pocket Scales had cut off; that the Rector was sent for, the constable was coming, and they should all be hanged. Mr. Scales's own intellect was anything but clear as to the possible issues. Crest-fallen, and with the coat-tail in his hands as an attestation that he was innocent of anything more than a joke, he went and made his confession. His story relieved Christian a little, but did not relieve Mr. Debarry, who was more annoyed at the loss of the letters, and their chance of getting into hands that might make use of them, than at the loss of the bank-notes. *Nothing could be done for the present, but that the Rector, who was a magistrate, should instruct the constables, and that the spot in the park indicated by Scales should again be carefully searched.* This was done, but in vain; and many of the family at the Manor had disturbed sleep that night.

CHAPTER XIII.

"Give sorrow leave awhile, to tutor me
To this submission."— *Richard II.*

MEANWHILE Felix Holt had been making his way back from Sproxtton to Treby in some irritation and bitterness of spirit. For a little while he walked slowly along the direct road, hoping that Mr. Johnson would overtake him, in which case he would have the pleasure of quarrelling with him, and telling him what he thought of his intentions in coming to cant at the Sugar Loaf. But he presently checked himself in this folly and turned off again towards the canal, that he might avoid the temptation of getting into a passion to no purpose.

"Where's the good," he thought, "of pulling at such a tangled skein as this electioneering trickery? As long as three-fourths of the men in this country see nothing in an election but self-interest, and nothing in self-interest but some form of greed, one might as well try to purify the proceedings of the fishes, and say to a hungry codfish — 'My good friend, abstain; don't goggle your eyes so, or show such a stupid gluttonous mouth, or think the little fishes are worth nothing except in relation to your own inside.' He'd be open to no argument short of crimping him. I should get into a rage with this fellow, and perhaps end by thrashing him. There's some reason in me as long as I keep my temper, but my rash humor is drunkenness without wine. I shouldn't wonder if he upsets all my plans with these colliers. Of course he's going to treat them for the sake of getting up a posse at the nomination and speechifyings. They'll drink double, and never come near me on a Saturday evening. I don't know what sort of man Transome really is. It's no use my speaking to anybody else, but if I could get at him, he might put a veto on this thing. Though, when once the men have been promised and set agoing, the mischief is likely to be past mending. Hang the Liberal codfish! I shouldn't have minded so much if he'd been a Tory!"

Felix went along in the twilight struggling in this way with the intricacies of life, which would certainly be greatly simplified if corrupt practices were the invariable mark of wrong opinions. When he had crossed the common and had entered the park, the overshadowing trees deepened the gray gloom of the evening; it was useless to try and keep the blind path, and he could only be careful that his steps should be bent in the direction of the park-gate. He was striding along rapidly now, whistling "*Bannockburn*" in a subdued way as an accompaniment to his inward discussion, when something smooth and soft on which his foot alighted arrested him with an unpleasant startling sensation, and made him stoop to examine the object he was treading on. He found it to be a large leather pocket-book swelled by its contents, and fastened with a sealed ribbon as well as a clasp. In stooping he saw about a yard off something whitish and square lying on the dark grass. This was an ornamental note-book of pale leather stamped with gold. Apparently it had burst open in falling, and out of the pocket, formed by the cover, there protruded a small gold chain about four inches long, with various seals and other trifles attached to it by a ring at the end. Felix

thrust the chain back, and finding that the clasp of the note-book was broken, he closed it and thrust it into his side-pocket, walking along under some annoyance that fortune had made him the finder of articles belonging most probably to one of the family at Treby Manor. He was much too proud a man to like any contact with the aristocracy, and he could still less endure coming within speech of their servants. Some plan must be devised by which he could avoid carrying these things up to the Manor himself: he thought at first of leaving them at the lodge, but he had a scruple against placing property, of which the ownership was after all uncertain, in the hand of persons unknown to him. It was possible that the large pocket-book contained papers of high importance, and that it did not belong to any of the Debarry family. He resolved at last to carry his findings to Mr. Lyon, who would perhaps be good-natured enough to save him from the necessary transactions with the people at the Manor by undertaking those transactions himself. With this determination he walked straight to Malthouse Yard, and waited outside the chapel until the congregation was dispersing, when he passed along the aisle to the vestry in order to speak to the minister in private.

But Mr. Lyon was not alone when Felix entered. Mr. Nuttwood, the grocer, who was one of the deacons, was complaining to him about the obstinate demeanor of the singers, who had declined to change the tunes in accordance with a change in the selection of hymns, and had stretched short metre into long out of pure wilfulness and defiance, irreverently adapting the most sacred monosyllables to a multitude of wandering quavers, arranged, it was to be feared, by some musician who was inspired by conceit rather than by the true spirit of psalmody.

"Come in, my friend," said Mr. Lyon, smiling at Felix, and then continuing in a faint voice, while he wiped the perspiration from his brow and bald crown, "Brother Nuttwood, we must be content to carry a thorn in our sides while the necessities of our imperfect state demand that there should be a body set apart and called a choir, whose special office it is to lead the singing, not because they are more disposed to the devout uplifting of praise, but because they are endowed with better vocal organs, and have attained more of the musician's art. For all office, unless it be accompanied by peculiar grace, becomes, as it were, a diseased organ, seeking to make itself too much of a centre. Singers, specially so called, are, it

must be confessed, an anomaly among us who seek to reduce the Church to its primitive simplicity, and to cast away all that may obstruct the direct communion of spirit with spirit."

"They are so headstrong," said Mr. Nuttwood, in a tone of sad perplexity, "that if we dealt not warily with them, they might end in dividing the church, even now that we have had the chapel enlarged. Brother Kemp would side with them, and draw the half part of the members after him. I cannot but think it a snare when a professing Christian has a bass voice like Brother Kemp's. It makes him desire to be heard of men; but the weaker song of the humble may have more power in the ear of God."

"Do you think it any better vanity to flatter yourself that God likes to hear you, though men don't?" said Felix, with unwarrantable bluntness.

The civil grocer was prepared to be scandalized by anything that came from Felix. In common with many hearers in Malthouse Yard, he already felt an objection to a young man who was notorious for having interfered in a question of wholesale and retail, which should have been left to Providence. Old Mr. Holt, being a church-member, had probably had "leadings" which were more to be relied on than his son's boasted knowledge. In any case, a little visceral disturbance and inward chastisement to the consumers of questionable medicines would tend less to obscure the divine glory than a show of punctilious morality in one who was not a "professor." Besides, how was it to be known that the medicines would not be blessed, if taken with due trust in a higher influence? A Christian must consider not the medicines alone in their relation to our frail bodies (which are dust), but the medicines with Omnipotence behind them. Hence a pious vender will look for "leadings," and he is likely to find them in the cessation of demand and the disproportion of expenses and returns. The grocer was thus on his guard against the presumptuous disputant.

"Mr. Lyon may understand you, sir," he replied. "He seems to be fond of your conversation. But you have too much of the pride of human learning for me. I follow no new lights."

"Then follow an old one," said Felix, mischievously disposed towards a sleek tradesman. "Follow the light of the old-fashioned Presbyterians that I've heard sing at Glasgow. The preacher gives out the psalm, and then everybody sings a different tune, as it happens to turn up in their throats. It's

a domineering thing to set a tune and expect everybody else to follow it. It's a denial of private judgment."

"Hush, hush, my young friend," said Mr. Lyon, hurt by this levity, which glanced at himself as well as at the deacon. "Play not with paradoxes. That caustic which you handle in order to scorch others, may happen to sear your own fingers and make them dead to the quality of things. 'Tis difficult enough to see our way and keep our torch steady in this dim labyrinth: to whirl the torch and dazzle the eyes of our fellow-seekers is a poor daring, and may end in total darkness. You yourself are a lover of freedom, and a bold rebel against usurping authority. But the right to rebellion is the right to seek a higher rule, and not to wander in mere lawlessness. Wherefore, I beseech you, seem not to say that liberty is license. And I apprehend — though I am not endowed with an ear to seize those earthly harmonies, which to some devout souls have seemed, as it were, the broken echoes of the heavenly choir — I apprehend that there is a law in music, disobedience whereunto would bring us in our singing to the level of shrieking maniacs or howling beasts: so that herein we are well instructed how true liberty can be nought but the transfer of obedience from the will of one or of a few men to that will which is the norm or rule for all men. And though the transfer may sometimes be but an erroneous direction of search, yet is the search good and necessary to the ultimate finding. And even as in music, where all obey and concur to one end, so that each has the joy of contributing to a whole whereby he is ravished and lifted up into the courts of heaven, so will it be in that crowning time of the millennial reign, when our daily prayer will be fulfilled, and one law shall be written on all hearts, and be the very structure of all thought, and be the principle of all action."

Tired, even exhausted, as the minister had been when Felix Holt entered, the gathering excitement of speech gave more and more energy to his voice and manner; he walked away from the vestry table, he paused, and came back to it; he walked away again, then came back, and ended with his deepest-toned largo, keeping his hands clasped behind him, while his brown eyes were bright with the lasting youthfulness of enthusiastic thought and love. But to any one who had no share in the energies that were thrilling his little body, he would have looked queer enough. No sooner had he finished his eager speech, than he held out his hand to the deacon, and said, in his former faint tone of fatigue, —

"God be with you, brother. We shall meet to-morrow, and we will see what can be done to subdue these refractory spirits."

When the deacon was gone, Felix said, "Forgive me, Mr. Lyon; I was wrong, and you are right."

"Yes, yes, my friend; you have that mark of grace within you, that you are ready to acknowledge the justice of a rebuke. Sit down; you have something to say — some packet there."

They sat down at a corner of the small table, and Felix drew the note-book from his pocket to lay it down with the pocket-book, saying, —

"I've had the ill-luck to be the finder of these things in the Debarrys' Park. Most likely they belong to one of the family at the Manor, or to some grandee who is staying there. I hate having anything to do with such people. They'll think me a poor rascal, and offer me money. You are a known man, and I thought you would be kind enough to relieve me by taking charge of these things, and writing to Debarry, not mentioning me, and asking him to send some one for them. I found them on the grass in the park this evening about half-past seven, in the corner we cross going to Sproxton."

"Stay," said Mr. Lyon, "this little book is open; we may venture to look in it for some sign of ownership. There be others who possess property, and might be crossing that end of the park, besides the Debarrys."

As he lifted the note-book close to his eyes, the chain again slipped out. He arrested it and held it in his hand, while he examined some writing, which appeared to be a name on the inner leather. He looked long, as if he were trying to decipher something that was partly rubbed out; and his hands began to tremble noticeably. He made a movement in an agitated manner, as if he were going to examine the chain and seals, which he held in his hand. But he checked himself, closed his hand again, and rested it on the table, while with the other hand he pressed the sides of the note-book together.

Felix observed his agitation, and was much surprised; but with a delicacy of which he was capable under all his abruptness, he said, "You are overcome with fatigue, sir. I was thoughtless to tease you with these matters at the end of Sunday, when you have been preaching three sermons."

Mr. Lyon did not speak for a few moments, but at last he said, —

"It is true. I am overcome. It was a name I saw — a name that called up a past sorrow. Fear not; I will do what is needful with these things. You may trust them to me."

With trembling fingers he replaced the chain, and tied both the large pocket-book and the note-book in his handkerchief. He was evidently making a great effort over himself. But when he had gathered the knot of the handkerchief in his hand, he said, —

"Give me your arm to the door, my friend. I feel ill. Doubtless I am over-wearied."

The door was already open, and Lyddy was watching for her master's return. Felix therefore said good-night and passed on, sure that this was what Mr. Lyon would prefer. The minister's supper of warm porridge was ready by the kitchen-fire, where he always took it on a Sunday evening, and afterwards smoked his weekly pipe up the broad chimney — the one great relaxation he allowed himself. Smoking, he considered, was a recreation of the travailed spirit, which, if indulged in, might endear this world to us by the ignoble bonds of mere sensuous ease. Daily smoking might be lawful, but it was not expedient. And in this Esther concurred with a doctrinal eagerness that was unusual in her. It was her habit to go to her own room, professedly to bed, very early on Sundays — immediately on her return from chapel — that she might avoid her father's pipe. But this evening she had remained at home, under a true plea of not feeling well; and when she heard him enter, she ran out of the parlor to meet him.

"Father, you are ill," she said, as he tottered to the wicker-bottomed arm-chair, while Lyddy stood by, shaking her head.

"No, my dear," he answered feebly, as she took off his hat and looked in his face inquiringly; "I am weary."

"Let me lay these things down for you," said Esther, touching the bundle in the handkerchief.

"No; they are matters which I have to examine," he said, laying them on the table, and putting his arm across them. "Go you to bed, Lyddy."

"Not me, sir. If ever a man looked as if he was struck with death, it's you, this very night as here is."

"Nonsense, Lyddy," said Esther, angrily. "Go to bed when my father desires it. I will stay with him."

Lyddy was electrified by surprise at this new behavior of Miss Esther's. She took her candle silently and went.

"Go you too, my dear," said Mr. Lyon, tenderly, giving his

hand to Esther, when Lyddy was gone. "It is your wont to go early. Why are you up?"

"Let me lift your porridge from before the fire, and stay with you, father. You think I'm so naughty that I don't like doing anything for you," said Esther, smiling rather sadly at him.

"Child, what has happened? you have become the image of your mother to-night," said the minister, in a loud whisper. The tears came and relieved him, while Esther, who had stooped to lift the porridge from the fender, paused on one knee and looked up at him.

"She was very good to you?" asked Esther, softly.

"Yes, dear. She did not reject my affection. She thought not scorn of my love. She would have forgiven me, if I had erred against her, from very tenderness. Could you forgive me, child?"

"Father, I have not been good to you; but I will be, I will be," said Esther, laying her head on his knee.

He kissed her head. "Go to bed, my dear; I would be alone."

When Esther was lying down that night, she felt as if the little incidents between herself and her father on this Sunday had made it an epoch. Very slight words and deeds may have a sacramental efficacy, if we can cast our self-love behind us, in order to say or do them. And it has been well believed through many ages that the beginning of compunction is the beginning of a new life; that the mind which sees itself blameless may be called dead in trespasses — in trespasses on the love of others, in trespasses on their weakness, in trespasses on all those great claims which are the image of our own need.

But Esther persisted in assuring herself that she was not bending to any criticism from Felix. She was full of resentment against his rudeness, and yet more against his too harsh conception of her character. She was determined to keep as much at a distance from him as possible.

CHAPTER XIV.

This man's metallic; at a sudden blow
His soul rings hard. I cannot lay my palm,
Trembling with life, upon that jointed brass.
I shudder at the cold unanswering touch;
But if it press me in response, I'm bruised.

THE next morning, when the Debarrys, including the Rector, who had ridden over to the Manor early, were still seated at breakfast, Christian came in with a letter, saying that it had been brought by a man employed at the chapel in Malthouse Yard, who had been ordered by the minister to use all speed and care in the delivery.

The letter was addressed to Sir Maximus.

"Stay, Christian, it may possibly refer to the lost pocket-book," said Philip Debarry, who was beginning to feel rather sorry for his factotum, as a reaction from previous suspicions and indignation.

Sir Maximus opened the letter and felt for his glasses, but then said, "Here, you read it, Phil: the man writes a hand like small print."

Philip cast his eyes over it, and then read aloud in a tone of satisfaction:—

SIR,—I send this letter to apprise you that I have now in my possession certain articles, which, last evening, at about half-past seven o'clock, were found lying on the grass at the western extremity of your park. The articles are—1°, a well-filled pocket-book, of brown leather, fastened with a black ribbon and with a seal of red wax; 2°, a small note-book, covered with gilded vellum, whereof the clasp was burst, and from out whereof had partly escaped a small gold chain, with seals and a locket attached, the locket bearing on the back a device, and round the face a female name.

Wherefore I request that you will further my effort to place these articles in the right hands, by ascertaining whether any person within your walls claims them as his property, and by sending that person to me (if such be found); for I will on no account let them pass from my care save into that of one who, declaring himself to be the owner, can state to me what is the impression on the seal, and what the device and name upon the locket.

I am, Sir, yours to command in all right dealing,

RUFUS LYON

MALTHOUSE YARD, Oct. 3, 1832.

"Well done, old Lyon," said the Rector; "I didn't think that any composition of his would ever give me so much pleasure."

"What an old fox it is!" said Sir Maximus. "Why couldn't he send the things to me at once along with the letter?"

"No, no, Max; he uses a justifiable caution," said the Rector, a refined and rather severe likeness of his brother, with a ring of fearlessness and decision in his voice which startled all flaccid men and unruly boys. "What are you going to do, Phil?" he added, seeing his nephew rise.

"To write, of course. Those other matters are yours, I suppose?" said Mr. Debarry, looking at Christian.

"Yes, sir."

"I shall send you with a letter to the preacher. You can describe your own property. And the seal, uncle — was it your coat-of-arms?"

"No, it was this head of Achilles. Here, I can take it off the ring, and you can carry it, Christian. But don't lose that, for I've had it ever since eighteen hundred. I should like to send my compliments with it," the Rector went on, looking at his brother, "and beg that since he has so much wise caution at command, he would exercise a little in more public matters, instead of making himself a firebrand in my parish, and teaching hucksters and tape-weavers that it's their business to dictate to statesmen."

"How did Dissenters, and Methodists, and Quakers, and people of that sort first come up, uncle?" said Miss Selina, a radiant girl of twenty, who had given much time to the harp.

"Dear me, Selina," said her elder sister, Harriet, whose forte was general knowledge, "don't you remember 'Woodstock'? They were in Cromwell's time."

"Oh! Holdenough, and those people? Yes; but they preached in the churches; they had no chapels. Tell me, uncle Gus; I like to be wise," said Selina, looking up at the face which was smiling down on her with a sort of severe benignity. "Phil says I'm an ignorant puss."

"The seeds of Nonconformity were sown at the Reformation, my dear, when some obstinate men made scruples about surplices and the place of the communion-table, and other trifles of that sort. But the Quakers came up about Cromwell's time, and the Methodists only in the last century. The first Methodists were regular clergymen, the more's the pity."

"But all those wrong things — why didn't government put them down?"

"Ah, to be sure," fell in Sir Maximus, in a cordial tone of corroboration.

"Because error is often strong, and government is often weak, my dear. Well, Phil, have you finished your letter?"

"Yes, I will read it to you," said Philip, turning and leaning over the back of his chair with the letter in his hand.

There is a portrait of Mr. Philip Debarry still to be seen at Treby Manor, and a very fine bust of him at Rome, where he died fifteen years later, a convert to Catholicism. His face would have been plain but for the exquisite setting of his hazel eyes, which fascinated even the dogs of the household. The other features, though slight and irregular, were redeemed from triviality by the stamp of gravity and intellectual preoccupation in his face and bearing. As he read aloud, his voice was what his uncle's might have been if it had been modulated by delicate health and a visitation of self-doubt.

SIR, — In reply to the letter with which you have favored me this morning, I beg to state that the articles you describe were lost from the pocket of my servant, who is the bearer of this letter to you, and is the claimant of the vellum note-book and the gold chain. The large leathern pocket-book is my own property, and the impression on the wax, a helmeted head of Achilles, was made by my uncle, the Rev. Augustus Debarry, who allows me to forward his seal to you in proof that I am not making a mistaken claim.

I feel myself under deep obligation to you, sir, for the care and trouble you have taken in order to restore to its right owner a piece of property which happens to be of particular importance to me. And I shall consider myself doubly fortunate if at any time you can point out to me some method by which I may procure you as lively a satisfaction as I am now feeling, in that full and speedy relief from anxiety which I owe to your considerate conduct.

I remain, Sir, your obliged and faithful servant,

PHILIP DEBARRY.

"You know best, Phil, of course," said Sir Maximus, pushing his plate from him, by way of interjection. "But it seems to me you exaggerate preposterously every little service a man happens to do for you. Why should you make a general offer of that sort? How do you know what he will be asking you to do? Stuff and nonsense! Tell Willis to send him a few head of game. You should think twice before you give a blank check of that sort to one of these quibbling, meddling some Radicals."

"You are afraid of my committing myself to 'the bottomless perjury of an *et cetera*,'" said Philip, smiling, as he

turned to fold his letter. "But I think I am not doing any mischief; at all events I could not be content to say less. And I have a notion that he would regard a present of game just now as an insult. I should, in his place."

"Yes, yes, you; but you don't make yourself a measure of Dissenting preachers, I hope," said Sir Maximus, rather wrathfully. "What do *you* say, Gus?"

"Phil is right," said the Rector, in an absolute tone. "I would not deal with a Dissenter, or put profits into the pocket of a Radical which I might put into the pocket of a good Churchman and a quiet subject. But if the greatest scoundrel in the world made way for me, or picked my hat up, I would thank him. So would you, Max."

"Pooh! I didn't mean that one shouldn't behave like a gentleman," said Sir Maximus, in some vexation. He had great pride in his son's superiority even to himself; but he did not enjoy having his own opinion argued down as it always was, and did not quite trust the dim vision opened by Phil's new words and new notions. He could only submit in silence while the letter was delivered to Christian, with the order to start for Malthouse Yard immediately.

Meanwhile, in that somewhat dim locality the possible claimant of the note-book and the chain was thought of and expected with palpitating agitation. Mr. Lyon was seated in his study, looking haggard and already aged from a sleepless night. He was so afraid lest his emotion should deprive him of the presence of mind necessary to the due attention to particulars in the coming interview, that he continued to occupy his sight and touch with the objects which had stirred the depths, not only of memory, but of dread. Once again he unlocked a small box which stood beside his desk, and took from it a little oval locket, and compared this with one which hung with the seals on the stray gold chain. There was the same device in enamel on the back of both: clasped hands surrounded with blue flowers. Both had round the face a name in gold italics on a blue ground: the name on the locket taken from the drawer was *Maurice*; the name on the locket which hung with the seals was *Annette*, and within the circle of this name there was a lover's knot of light-brown hair, which matched a curl that lay in the box. The hair in the locket which bore the name of Maurice was of a very dark brown, and before returning it to the drawer Mr. Lyon noted the color and quality of this hair more carefully than ever. Then he recurred to the note-book: undoubtedly there had

been something, probably a third name, beyond the names *Maurice Christian*, which had themselves been rubbed and slightly smeared as if by accident; and from the very first examination in the vestry, Mr. Lyon could not prevent himself from transferring the mental image of the third name in faint lines to the rubbed leather. The leaves of the note-book seemed to have been recently inserted; they were of fresh white paper, and only one bore some abbreviations in pencil with a notation of small sums. Nothing could be gathered from the comparison of the writing in the book with that of the yellow letters which lay in the box: the smeared name had been carefully printed, and so bore no resemblance to the signature of those letters; and the pencil abbreviations and figures had been made too hurriedly to bear any decisive witness. "I will ask him to write — to write a description of the locket," had been one of Mr. Lyon's thoughts; but he faltered in that intention. His power of fulfilling it must depend on what he saw in this visitor, of whose coming he had a horrible dread, at the very time he was writing to demand it. In that demand he was obeying the voice of his rigid conscience, which had never left him perfectly at rest under his one act of deception — the concealment from Esther that he was not her natural father, the assertion of a false claim upon her. "Let my path be henceforth simple," he had said to himself in the anguish of that night; "let me seek to know what is, and if possible to declare it." If he was really going to find himself face to face with the man who had been Annette's husband, and who was Esther's father — if that wandering of his from the light had brought the punishment of a blind sacrilege as the issue of a conscious transgression, — he prayed that he might be able to accept all consequences of pain to himself. But he saw other possibilities concerning the claimant of the book and chain. His ignorance and suspicions as to the history and character of Annette's husband made it credible that he had laid a plan for convincing her of his death as a means of freeing himself from a burdensome tie; but it seemed equally probable that he was really dead, and that these articles of property had been a bequest, or a payment, or even a sale, to their present owner. Indeed, in all these years there was no knowing into how many hands such pretty trifles might have passed. And the claimant might, after all, have no connection with the Debarrys; he might not come on this day or the next. There might be more time left for reflection and prayer.

All these possibilities, which would remove the pressing need for difficult action, Mr. Lyon represented to himself, but he had no effective belief in them; his belief went with his strongest feeling, and in these moments his strongest feeling was dread. He trembled under the weight that seemed already added to his own sin; he felt himself already confronted by Annette's husband and Esther's father. Perhaps the father was a gentleman on a visit to the Debarrys. There was no hindering the pang with which the old man said to himself,—

"The child will not be sorry to leave this poor home, and I shall be guilty in her sight."

He was walking about among the rows of books when there came a loud rap at the outer door. The rap shook him so that he sank into his chair, feeling almost powerless. Lyddy presented herself.

"Here's ever such a fine man from the Manor wants to see you, sir. Dear heart, dear heart! shall I tell him you're too bad to see him?"

"Show him up," said Mr. Lyon, making an effort to rally. When Christian appeared, the minister half rose, leaning on an arm of his chair, and said, "Be seated, sir," seeing nothing but that a tall man was entering.

"I've brought you a letter from Mr. Debarry," said Christian, in an off-hand manner. This rusty little man, in his dismal chamber, seemed to the Ulysses of the steward's room a pitiable sort of human curiosity, to whom a man of the world would speak rather loudly, in accommodation to an eccentricity which was likely to be accompanied with deafness. One cannot be eminent in everything; and if Mr. Christian had dispersed his faculties in study that would have enabled him to share unconventional points of view, he might have worn a mistaken kind of boot, and been less competent to win at *écarté*, or at betting, or in any other contest suitable to a person of figure.

As he seated himself, Mr. Lyon opened the letter, and held it close to his eyes, so that his face was hidden. But at the word "servant" he could not avoid starting, and looking off the letter towards the bearer. Christian, knowing what was in the letter, conjectured that the old man was amazed to learn that so distinguished-looking a personage was a servant; he leaned forward with his elbows on his knees, balanced his cane on his fingers, and began a whispering whistle. The minister checked himself, finished the reading of the letter, and then slowly and nervously put on his spectacles to survey

this man, between whose fate and his own there might be a terrible collision. The word "servant" had been a fresh caution to him. He must do nothing rashly. Esther's lot was deeply concerned.

"Here is the seal mentioned in the letter," said Christian.

Mr. Lyon drew the pocket-book from his desk, and after comparing the seal with the impression, said, "It is right, sir: I deliver the pocket-book to you."

He held it out with the seal, and Christian rose to take them, saying, carelessly, "The other things — the chain and the little book — are mine."

"Your name then is —"

"Maurice Christian."

A spasm shot through Mr. Lyon. It had seemed possible that he might hear another name, and be freed from the worse half of his anxiety. His next words were not wisely chosen, but escaped him impulsively.

"And you have no other name?"

"What do you mean?" said Christian, sharply.

"Be so good as to reseat yourself."

Christian did not comply. "I'm rather in a hurry, sir," he said, recovering his coolness. "If it suits you to restore to me those small articles of mine, I shall be glad; but I would rather leave them behind than be detained." He had reflected that the minister was simply a punctilious old bore. The question meant nothing else. But Mr. Lyon had wrought himself up to the task of finding out, then and there, if possible, whether or not this were Annette's husband. How could he lay himself and his sin before God if he wilfully declined to learn the truth?

"Nay, sir, I will not detain you unreasonably," he said, in a firmer tone than before. "How long have these articles been your property?"

"Oh, for more than twenty years," said Christian, carelessly.

He was not altogether easy under the minister's persistence, but for that very reason he showed no more impatience.

"You have been in France and in Germany?"

"I have been in most countries on the Continent."

"Be so good as to write me your name," said Mr. Lyon, dipping a pen in the ink, and holding it out with a piece of paper.

Christian was much surprised, but not now greatly alarmed. In his rapid conjectures as to the explanation of the minister's curiosity, he had alighted on one which might carry advantage

rather than inconvenience. But he was not going to commit himself.

"Before I oblige you there, sir," he said, laying down the pen, and looking straight at Mr. Lyon, "I must know exactly the reasons you have for putting these questions to me. You are a stranger to me — an excellent person, I dare say — but I have no concern about you farther than to get from you those small articles. Do you still doubt that they are mine? You wished, I think, that I should tell you what the locket is like. It has a pair of hands and blue flowers on one side, and the name Annette round the hair on the other side. That is all I have to say. If you wish for anything more from me, you will be good enough to tell me why you wish it. Now then, sir, what is your concern with me?"

The cool stare, the hard challenging voice, with which these words were uttered, made them fall like the beating cutting chill of heavy hail on Mr. Lyon. He sank back in his chair in utter irresolution and helplessness. How was it possible to lay bare the sad and sacred past in answer to such a call as this? The dread with which he had thought of this man's coming, the strongly-confirmed suspicion that he was really Annette's husband, intensified the antipathy created by his gestures and glances. The sensitive little minister knew instinctively that words which would cost him efforts as painful as the obedient footsteps of a wounded bleeding hound that wills a foreseen throe, would fall on this man as the pressure of tender fingers falls on a brazen glove. And Esther — if this man was her father — every additional word might help to bring down irrevocable, perhaps cruel, consequences on her. A thick mist seemed to have fallen where Mr. Lyon was looking for the track of duty: the difficult question, how far he was to care for consequences in seeking and avowing the truth, seemed anew obscured. All these things, like the vision of a coming calamity, were compressed into a moment of consciousness. Nothing could be done to-day; everything must be deferred. He answered Christian in a low apologetic tone.

"It is true, sir; you have told me all I can demand. I have no sufficient reason for detaining your property further."

He handed the note-book and chain to Christian, who had been observing him narrowly, and now said, in a tone of indifference, as he pocketed the articles, —

"Very good, sir. I wish you a good-morning."

"Good-morning," said Mr. Lyon, feeling, while the door closed behind his guest, that mixture of uneasiness and relief

which all procrastination of difficulty produces in minds capable of strong forecast. The work was still to be done. He had still before him the task of learning everything that could be learned about this man's relation to himself and Esther.

Christian, as he made his way back along Malthouse Lane, was thinking, "This old fellow has got some secret in his head. It's not likely he can know anything about me : it must be about Bycliffe. But Bycliffe was a gentleman : how should he ever have had anything to do with such a seedy old ranter as that ?"

CHAPTER XV.

And doubt shall be as lead upon the feet
Of thy most anxious will.

MR. LYON was careful to look in at Felix as soon as possible after Christian's departure, to tell him that his trust was discharged. During the rest of the day he was somewhat relieved from agitating reflections by the necessity of attending to his ministerial duties, the rebuke of rebellious singers being one of them ; and on his return from the Monday evening prayer-meeting he was so overcome with weariness that he went to bed without taking note of any objects in his study. But when he rose the next morning, his mind, once more eagerly active, was arrested by Philip Debarry's letter, which still lay open on his desk, and was arrested by precisely that portion which had been unheeded the day before : "*I shall consider myself doubly fortunate if at any time you can point out to me some method by which I may procure you as lively a satisfaction as I am now feeling, in that full and speedy relief from anxiety which I owe to your considerate conduct.*"

To understand how these words would carry the suggestion they actually had for the minister in a crisis of peculiar personal anxiety and struggle, we must bear in mind that for many years he had walked through life with the sense of having for a space been unfaithful to what he esteemed the highest trust ever committed to man—the ministerial vocation. In a mind of any nobleness, a lapse into transgression against an object still regarded as supreme, issues in a new and purer devotedness, chastised by humility and watched over by a passionate regret. So it was with that ardent spirit which

animated the little body of Rufus Lyon. Once in his life he had been blinded, deafened, hurried along by rebellious impulse; he had gone astray after his own desires, and had let the fire die out on the altar; and as the true penitent, hating his self-besotted error, asks from all coming life duty instead of joy, and service instead of ease, so Rufus was perpetually on the watch lest he should ever again postpone to some private affection a great public opportunity which to him was equivalent to a command.

Now here was an opportunity brought by a combination of that unexpected incalculable kind which might be regarded as the Divine emphasis invoking especial attention to trivial events — an opportunity of securing what Rufus Lyon had often wished for as a means of honoring truth, and exhibiting error in the character of a stammering, halting, short-breathed usurper of office and dignity. What was more exasperating to a zealous preacher, with whom copious speech was not a difficulty but a relief — who never lacked argument, but only combatants and listeners — than to reflect that there were thousands on thousands of pulpits in this kingdom, supplied with handsome sounding-boards, and occupying an advantageous position in buildings far larger than the chapel in Malt-house Yard — buildings sure to be places of resort, even as the markets were, if only from habit and interest; and that these pulpits were filled, or rather made vacuous, by men whose privileged education in the ancient centres of instruction issued in twenty minutes' formal reading of tepid exhortation or probably infirm deductions from premises based on rotten scaffolding? And it is in the nature of exasperation gradually to concentrate itself. The sincere antipathy of a dog towards cats in general, necessarily takes the form of indignant barking at the neighbor's black cat which makes daily trespass; the bark at imagined cats, though a frequent exercise of the canine mind, is yet comparatively feeble. Mr. Lyon's sarcasm was not without an edge when he dilated in general on an elaborate education for teachers which issued in the minimum of teaching, but it found a whetstone in the particular example of that bad system known as the Rector of Treby Magna. There was nothing positive to be said against the Rev. Augustus Debarry; his life could not be pronounced blameworthy except for its negatives. And the good Rufus was too pure-minded not to be glad of that. He had no delight in vice as discrediting wicked opponents; he shrank from dwelling on the images of cruelty or of grossness, and

his indignation was habitually inspired only by those moral and intellectual mistakes which darken the soul but do not injure or degrade the temple of the body. If the Rector had been a less respectable man, Rufus would have more reluctantly made him an object of antagonism; but as an incarnation of soul-destroying error, dissociated from those baser sins which have no good repute even with the worldly, it would be an argumentative luxury to get into close quarters with him, and fight with a dialectic short-sword in the eyes of the Treby world (sending also a written account thereof to the chief organs of Dissenting opinion). Vice was essentially stupid — a deaf and eyeless monster, insusceptible to demonstration: the Spirit might work on it by unseen ways, and the unstudied sallies of sermons were often as the arrows which pierced and awakened the brutified conscience; but illuminated thought, finely dividing speech, were the choicer weapons of the Divine armory, which whoso could wield must be careful not to leave idle.

Here, then, was the longed-for opportunity. Here was an engagement — an expression of a strong wish — on the part of Philip Debarry, if it were in his power, to procure a satisfaction to Rufus Lyon. How had that man of God and exemplary Independent minister, Mr. Ainsworth, of persecuted sanctity, conducted himself when a similar occasion had befallen him at Amsterdam? He had thought of nothing but the glory of the highest cause, and had converted the offer of recompense into a public debate with a Jew on the chief mysteries of the faith. Here was a model: the case was nothing short of a heavenly indication, and he, Rufus Lyon, would seize the occasion to demand a public debate with the Rector on the Constitution of the true Church.

What if he were inwardly torn by doubt and anxiety concerning his own private relations and the facts of his past life? That danger of absorption within the narrow bounds of self only urged him the more towards action which had a wider bearing, and might tell on the welfare of England, at large. It was decided. Before the minister went down to his breakfast that morning he had written the following letter to Mr. Philip Debarry: —

SIR, — Referring to your letter of yesterday, I find the following words: "I shall consider myself doubly fortunate if at any time you can point out to me some method by which I may procure you as lively a satisfaction as I am now feeling, in that full and speedy relief from anxiety which I owe to your considerate conduct."

I am not unaware, sir, that, in the usage of the world, there are words of courtesy (so called) which are understood, by those amongst whom they are current, to have no precise meaning, and to constitute no bond or obligation. I will not now insist that this is an abuse of language, wherein our fallible nature requires the strictest safeguards against laxity and misapplication, for I do not apprehend that in writing the words I have above quoted, you were open to the reproach of using phrases which, while seeming to carry a specific meaning, were really no more than what is called a polite form. I believe, sir, that you used these words advisedly, sincerely, and with an honorable intention of acting on them as a pledge, should such action be demanded. No other supposition on my part would correspond to the character you bear as a young man who aspires (albeit mistakenly) to engraft the finest fruits of public virtue on a creed and institutions, whereof the sap is composed rather of human self-seeking than of everlasting truth.

Wherefore I act on this my belief in the integrity of your written word ; and I beg you to procure for me (as it is doubtless in your power) that I may be allowed a public discussion with your near relative, the Rector of this parish, the Reverend Augustus Debarry, to be held in the large room of the Free School, or in the Assembly Room of the Marquis of Granby, these being the largest covered spaces at our command. For I presume he would neither allow me to speak within his church, nor would consent himself to speak within my chapel ; and the probable inclemency of the approaching season forbids an assured expectation that we could discourse in the open air. The subjects I desire to discuss are, — first, the Constitution of the true Church ; and, secondly, the bearing thereupon of the English Reformation. Confidently expecting that you will comply with this request, which is the sequence of your expressed desire, I remain, sir, yours, with the respect offered to a sincere withstander,

RUFUS LYON.

MALTHOUSE YARD.

After writing this letter, the good Rufus felt that serenity and elevation of mind which is infallibly brought by a preoccupation with the wider relations of things. Already he was beginning to sketch the course his argument might most judiciously take in the coming debate ; his thoughts were running into sentences, and marking off careful exceptions in parentheses ; and he had come down and seated himself at the breakfast-table quite automatically, without expectation of toast or coffee, when Esther's voice and touch recalled him to an inward debate of another kind, in which he felt himself much weaker. Again there arose before him the image of that cool, hard-eyed, worldly man, who might be this dear child's father, and one against whose rights he had himself grievously offended. Always as the image recurred to him Mr. Lyon's heart sent forth a prayer for guidance, but no definite guidance had yet made itself visible for him. It could not be guidance — it was a temptation — that said, "Let the matter rest : seek to know no more ; know only what is thrust upon you." The

remembrance that in his time of wandering he had wilfully remained in ignorance of facts which he might have inquired after, deepened the impression that it was now an imperative duty to seek the fullest attainable knowledge. And the inquiry might possibly issue in a blessed repose, by putting a negative on all his suspicions. But the more vividly all the circumstances became present to him, the more unfit he felt himself to set about any investigation concerning this man who called himself Maurice Christian. He could seek no confidant or helper among "the brethren;" he was obliged to admit to himself that the members of his church, with whom he hoped to go to heaven, were not easy to converse with on earth touching the deeper secrets of his experience, and were still less able to advise him as to the wisest procedure, in a case of high delicacy, with a worldling who had a carefully-trimmed whisker and a fashionable costume. For the first time in his life it occurred to the minister that he should be glad of an adviser who had more worldly than spiritual experience, and that it might not be inconsistent with his principles to seek some light from one who had studied human law. But it was a thought to be paused upon, and not followed out rashly; some other guidance might intervene.

Esther noticed that her father was in a fit of abstraction, that he seemed to swallow his coffee and toast quite unconsciously, and that he vented from time to time a low guttural interjection, which was habitual with him when he was absorbed by an inward discussion. She did not disturb him by remarks, and only wondered whether anything unusual had occurred on Sunday evening. But at last she thought it needful to say, "You recollect what I told you yesterday, father?"

"Nay, child; what?" said Mr. Lyon, rousing himself.

"That Mr. Jermyn asked me if you would probably be at home this morning before one o'clock."

Esther was surprised to see her father start and change color as if he had been shaken by some sudden collision before he answered, —

"Assuredly; I do not intend to move from my study after I have once been out to give this letter to Zachary."

"Shall I tell Lyddy to take him up at once to your study if he comes? If not, I shall have to stay in my own room, because I shall be at home all this morning, and it is rather cold now to sit without a fire."

"Yes, my dear, let him come up to me; unless, indeed, he should bring a second person, which might happen, seeing

that in all likelihood he is coming, as hitherto, on electioneering business. And I could not well accommodate two visitors up-stairs."

While Mr. Lyou went out to Zachary, the pew-opener, to give him a second time the commission of carrying a letter to Treby Manor, Esther gave her injunction to Lyddy that if one gentleman came he was to be shown up-stairs—if two, they were to be shown into the parlor. But she had to resolve various questions before Lyddy clearly saw what was expected of her, — as that, "if it was the gentleman as came on Thursday in the pepper-and-salt coat, was he to be shown up-stairs? And the gentleman from the Manor yesterday as went out whistling—had Miss Esther heard about him? There seemed no end of these great folks coming to Malt-house Yard since there was talk of the election; but they might be poor lost creatures the most of 'em." Whereupon Lyddy shook her head and groaned, under an edifying despair as to the future lot of gentlemen callers.

Esther always avoided asking questions of Lyddy, who found an answer as she found a key, by pouring out a pocketful of miscellanies. But she had remarked so many indications that something had happened to cause her father unusual excitement and mental preoccupation, that she could not help connecting with them the fact of this visit from the Manor, which he had not mentioned to her.

She sat down in the dull parlor and took up her netting; for since Sunday she had felt unable to read when she was alone, being obliged, in spite of herself, to think of Felix Holt—to imagine what he would like her to be, and what sort of views he took of life so as to make it seem valuable in the absence of all elegance, luxury, gayety, or romance. Had he yet reflected that he had behaved very rudely to her on Sunday? Perhaps not. Perhaps he had dismissed her from his mind with contempt. And at that thought Esther's eyes smarted unpleasantly. She was fond of netting, because it showed to advantage both her hand and her foot; and across this image of Felix Holt's indifference and contempt there passed the vaguer image of a possible somebody who would admire her hands and feet, and delight in looking at their beauty, and long, yet not dare, to kiss them. Life would be much easier in the presence of such a love. But it was precisely this longing after her own satisfaction that Felix had reproached her with. Did he want her to be heroic? That seemed impossible without some great occasion. Her life

was a heap of fragments, and so were her thoughts: some great energy was needed to bind them together. Esther was beginning to lose her complacency at her own wit and criticism; to lose the sense of superiority in an awakening need for reliance on one whose vision was wider, whose nature was purer and stronger than her own. But then, she said to herself, that "one" must be tender to her, not rude and predominating in his manners. A man with any chivalry in him could never adopt a scolding tone towards a woman—that is, towards a charming woman. But Felix had no chivalry in him. He loved lecturing and opinion too well ever to love any woman.

In this way Esther strove to see that Felix was thoroughly in the wrong—at least, if he did not come again expressly to show that he was sorry.

CHAPTER XVI.

TRUEBLUE. These men have no votes. Why should I court them?

GREYFOX. No votes, but power.

TRUEBLUE. What! over charities?

GREYFOX. No, over brains; which disturbs the canvass. In a natural state of things the average price of a vote at Paddlebrook is nine-and-six-pence, throwing the fifty-pound tenants, who cost nothing, into the divisor. But these talking men cause an artificial rise of prices.

THE expected important knock at the door came about twelve o'clock, and Esther could hear that there were two visitors. Immediately the parlor door was opened and the shaggy-haired, cravatless image of Felix Holt, which was just then full in the mirror of Esther's mind, was displaced by the highly-contrasted appearance of a personage whose name she guessed before Mr. Jermyn had announced it. The perfect morning costume of that day differed much from our present ideal: it was essential that a gentleman's chin should be well propped, that his collar should have a voluminous roll, that his waistcoat should imply much discrimination, and that his buttons should be arranged in a manner which would now expose him to general contempt. And it must not be forgotten that at the distant period when Treby Magna first knew the excitements of an election, there existed many other anomalies now obsolete, besides short-waisted coats and broad stiffeners.

But we have some notions of beauty and fitness which with-

stand the centuries; and quite irrespective of dates, it would be pronounced that at the age of thirty-four Harold Transome was a striking and handsome man. He was one of those people, as Denner had remarked, to whose presence in the room you could not be indifferent: if you do not hate or dread them, you must find the touch of their hands, nay, their very shadows, agreeable.

Esther felt a pleasure quite new to her as she saw his finely-embrowned face and full bright eyes turned towards her with an air of deference by which gallantry must commend itself to a refined woman who is not absolutely free from vanity. Harold Transome regarded women as slight things, but he was fond of slight things in the intervals of business; and he held it among the chief arts of life to keep these pleasant diversions within such bounds that they should never interfere with the course of his serious ambition. Esther was perfectly aware, as he took a chair near her, that he was under some admiring surprise at her appearance and manner. How could it be otherwise? She believed that in the eyes of a high-bred man no young lady in Treby could equal her: she felt a glow of delight at the sense that she was being looked at.

"My father expected you," she said to Mr. Jermyn. "I delivered your letter to him yesterday. He will be down immediately."

She disentangled her foot from her netting and wound it up.

"I hope you are not going to let us disturb you," said Harold, noticing her action. "We come to discuss election affairs, and we particularly desire to interest the ladies."

"I have no interest with any one who is not already on the right side," said Esther, smiling.

"I am happy to see at least that you wear the Liberal colors."

"I fear I must confess that it is more from love of blue than from love of Liberalism. Yellow opinions could only have brunettes on their side." Esther spoke with her usual pretty fluency, but she had no sooner uttered the words than she thought how angry they would have made Felix.

"If my cause is to be recommended by the becomingness of my colors, then I am sure you are acting in my interest by wearing them."

Esther rose to leave the room.

"Must you really go?" said Harold, preparing to open the door for her.

"Yes; I have an engagement — a lesson at half-past twelve," said Esther, bowing and floating out like a blue-robed Naiad, but not without a suffused blush as she passed through the doorway.

It was a pity the room was so small, Harold Transome thought: this girl ought to walk in a house where there were halls and corridors. But he had soon dismissed this chance preoccupation with Esther; for before the door was closed again Mr. Lyon had entered, and Harold was entirely bent on what had been the object of his visit. The minister, though no elector himself, had considerable influence over Liberal electors, and it was the part of wisdom in a candidate to cement all political adhesion by a little personal regard, if possible. Garstin was a harsh and wiry fellow; he seemed to suggest that sour whey, which some say was the original meaning of Whig in the Scottish, and it might assist the theoretic advantages of Radicalism if it could be associated with a more generous presence. What would conciliate the personal regard of old Mr. Lyon became a curious problem to Harold, now the little man made his appearance. But canvassing makes a gentleman acquainted with many strange animals, together with the ways of catching and taming them; and thus the knowledge of natural history advances amongst the aristocracy and the wealthy commoners of our land.

"I am very glad to have secured this opportunity of making your personal acquaintance, Mr. Lyon," said Harold, putting out his hand to the minister when Jermyn had mentioned his name. "I am to address the electors here, in the Market-Place, to-morrow; and I should have been sorry to do so without first paying my respects privately to my chief friends, as there may be points on which they particularly wish me to explain myself."

"You speak civilly, sir, and reasonably," said Mr. Lyon, with a vague shortsighted gaze, in which a candidate's appearance evidently went for nothing. "Pray be seated, gentlemen. It is my habit to stand."

He placed himself at a right angle with his visitors, his worn look of intellectual eagerness, slight frame, and rusty attire, making an odd contrast with their flourishing persons, unblemished costume, and comfortable freedom from excitement. The group was fairly typical of the difference between the men who are animated by ideas and the men who are expected to apply them. Then he drew forth his spectacles, and began to rub them with the thin end of his coat-tail. He

was inwardly exercising great self-mastery — suppressing the thought of his personal needs, which Jermyn's presence tended to suggest, in order that he might be equal to the larger duties of this occasion.

"I am aware — Mr. Jermyn has told me," said Harold, "what good service you have done me already, Mr. Lyon. The fact is, a man of intellect like you was especially needed in my case. The race I am running is really against Garstin only, who calls himself a Liberal, though he cares for nothing, and understands nothing, except the interests of the wealthy traders. And you have been able to explain the difference between Liberal and Liberal, which, as you and I know, is something like the difference between fish and fish."

"Your comparison is not unapt, sir," said Mr. Lyon, still holding his spectacles in his hand, "at this epoch, when the mind of the nation has been strained on the passing of one measure. Where a great weight has to be moved, we require not so much selected instruments as abundant horse-power. But it is an unavoidable evil of these massive achievements that they encourage a coarse indiscriminatingness obstructive of more nicely-wrought results, and an exaggerated expectation inconsistent with the intricacies of our fallen and struggling condition. I say not that compromise is unnecessary, but it is an evil attendant on our imperfection; and I would pray every one to mark that, where compromise broadens, intellect and conscience are thrust into narrower room. Wherefore it has been my object to show our people that there are many who have helped to draw the car of Reform, whose ends are but partial, and who forsake not the ungodly principle of selfish alliances, but would only substitute Syria for Egypt — thinking chiefly of their own share in peacocks, gold, and ivory."

"Just so," said Harold, who was quick at new languages, and still quicker at translating other men's generalities into his own special and immediate purposes, "men who will be satisfied if they can only bring in a plutocracy, buy up the land, and stick the old crests on their new gateways. Now the practical point to secure against these false Liberals at present is, that our electors should not divide their votes. As it appears that many who vote for Debarry are likely to split their votes in favor of Garstin, it is of the first consequence that my voters should give me plumpers. If they divide their votes they can't keep out Debarry, and they may help to keep out me. I feel some confidence in asking you to

use your influence in this direction, Mr. Lyon. We candidates have to praise ourselves more than is graceful; but you are aware that, while I belong by my birth to the classes that have their roots in tradition and all the old loyalties, my experience has lain chiefly among those who make their own career, and depend on the new rather than the old. I have had the advantage of considering national welfare under varied lights: I have wider views than those of a mere cotton lord. On questions connected with religious liberty I would stop short at no measure that was not thorough."

"I hope not, sir — I hope not," said Mr. Lyon, gravely; finally putting on his spectacles and examining the face of the candidate, whom he was preparing to turn into a catechumen. For the good Rufus, conscious of his political importance as an organ of persuasion, felt it his duty to catechise a little, and also to do his part towards impressing a probable legislator with a sense of his responsibility. But the latter branch of duty somewhat obstructed the catechising, for his mind was so urged by considerations which he held in danger of being overlooked, that the questions and answers bore a very slender proportion to his exposition. It was impossible to leave the question of church-rates without noting the grounds of their injustice, and without a brief enumeration of reasons why Mr. Lyon, for his own part, would not present that passive resistance to a legal imposition which had been adopted by the Friends (whose heroism in this regard was nevertheless worthy of all honor).

Comprehensive talkers are apt to be tiresome when we are not athirst for information, but, to be quite fair, we must admit that superior reticence is a good deal due to the lack of matter. Speech is often barren; but silence also does not necessarily brood over a full nest. Your still fowl, blinking at you without remark, may all the while be sitting on one addled nest-egg; and when it takes to cackling, will have nothing to announce but that addled delusion.

Harold Transome was not at all a patient man, but in matters of business he was quite awake to his cue, and in this case it was perhaps easier to listen than to answer questions. But Jermyn, who had plenty of work on his hands, took an opportunity of rising, and saying, as he looked at his watch, —

"I must really be at the office in five minutes. You will find me there, Mr. Transome; you have probably still many things to say to Mr. Lyon."

"I beseech you, sir," said the minister, changing color, and

by a quick movement laying his hand on Jermyn's arm — "I beseech you to favor me with an interview on some private business — this evening, if it were possible."

Mr. Lyon, like others who are habitually occupied with impersonal subjects, was liable to this impulsive sort of action. He snatched at the details of life as if they were darting past him — as if they were like the ribbons at his knees, which would never be tied all day if they were not tied on the instant. Through these spasmodic leaps out of his abstractions into real life, it constantly happened that he suddenly took a course which had been the subject of too much doubt with him ever to have been determined on by continuous thought. And if Jermyn had not startled him by threatening to vanish just when he was plunged in politics, he might never have made up his mind to confide in a worldly attorney.

("An odd man," as Mrs. Muscat observed, "to have such a gift in the pulpit. But there's one knows better than we do —" which, in a lady who rarely felt her judgment at a loss, was a concession that showed much piety.)

Jermyn was surprised at the little man's eagerness. "By all means," he answered, quite cordially. "Could you come to my office at eight o'clock?"

"For several reasons, I must beg you to come to me."

"Oh, very good. I'll walk out and see you this evening, if possible. I shall have much pleasure in being of any use to you." Jermyn felt that in the eyes of Harold he was appearing all the more valuable when his services were thus in request. He went out, and Mr. Lyon easily relapsed into politics, for he had been on the brink of a favorite subject on which he was at issue with his fellow-Liberals.

At that time, when faith in the efficacy of political change was at fever-heat in ardent Reformers, many measures which men are still discussing with little confidence on either side, were then talked about and disposed of like property in near reversion. Crying abuses — "bloated paupers," "bloated pluralists," and other corruptions hindering men from being wise and happy — had to be fought against and slain. Such a time is a time of hope. Afterwards, when the corpses of those monsters have been held up to the public wonder and abhorrence, and yet wisdom and happiness do not follow, but rather a more abundant breeding of the foolish and unhappy, comes a time of doubt and despondency. But in the great Reform-year Hope was mighty: the prospect of Reform had even

served the voters instead of drink ; and in one place, at least, there had been "a dry election." And now the speakers at Reform banquets were exuberant in congratulation and promise: Liberal clergymen of the Establishment toasted Liberal Catholic clergymen without any allusion to scarlet, and Catholic clergymen replied with a like tender reserve. Some dwelt on the abolition of all abuses, and on millennial blessedness generally ; others, whose imaginations were less suffused with exhalations of the dawn, insisted chiefly on the ballot-box.

Now on this question of the ballot the minister strongly took the negative side. Our pet opinions are usually those which place us in a minority of a minority amongst our own party : — very happily, else those poor opinions, born with no silver spoon in their mouths — how would they get nourished and fed ? So it was with Mr. Lyon and his objection to the ballot. But he had thrown out a remark on the subject which was not quite clear to his hearer, who interpreted it according to his best calculation of probabilities.

"I have no objection to the ballot," said Harold, "but I think that is not the sort of thing we have to work at just now. We shouldn't get it. And other questions are imminent."

"Then, sir, you would vote for the ballot?" said Mr. Lyon, stroking his chin.

"Certainly, if the point came up. I have too much respect for the freedom of the voter to oppose anything which offers a chance of making that freedom more complete."

Mr. Lyon looked at the speaker with a pitying smile and a subdued "h'm — m — m," which Harold took for a sign of satisfaction. He was soon undeceived.

"You grieve me, sir ; you grieve me much. And I pray you to reconsider this question, for it will take you to the root, as I think, of political morality. I engage to show to any impartial mind, duly furnished with the principles of public and private rectitude, that the ballot would be pernicious, and that if it were not pernicious it would still be futile. I will show, first, that it would be futile as a preservative from bribery and illegitimate influence ; and, secondly, that it would be in the worst kind pernicious, as shutting the door against those influences whereby the soul of a man and the character of a citizen are duly educated for their great functions. Be not alarmed if I detain you, sir. It is well worth the while."

"Confound this old man," thought Harold. "I'll never

make a canvassing call on a preacher again, unless he has lost his voice from a cold." He was going to excuse himself as prudently as he could, by deferring the subject till the morrow, and inviting Mr. Lyon to come to him in the committee-room before the time appointed for his public speech; but he was relieved by the opening of the door. Lyddy put in her head to say,—

"If you please, sir, here's Mr. Holt wants to know if he may come in and speak to the gentleman. He begs your pardon, but you're to say 'no' if you don't like him to come."

"Nay, show him in at once, Lyddy. A young man," Mr. Lyon went on, speaking to Harold, "whom a representative ought to know — no voter, but a man of ideas and study."

"He is thoroughly welcome," said Harold, truthfully enough, though he felt little interest in the voteless man of ideas except as a diversion from the subject of the ballot. He had been standing for the last minute or two, feeling less of a victim in that attitude, and more able to calculate on means of escape.

"Mr. Holt, sir," said the minister, as Felix entered, "is a young friend of mine, whose opinions on some points I hope to see altered, but who has a zeal for public justice which I trust he will never lose."

"I am glad to see Mr. Holt," said Harold, bowing. He perceived from the way in which Felix bowed to him and turned to the most distant spot in the room, that the candidate's shake of the hand would not be welcome here. "A formidable fellow," he thought, "capable of mounting a cart in the market-place to-morrow and cross-examining me, if I say anything that doesn't please him."

"Mr. Lyon," said Felix, "I have taken a liberty with you in asking to see Mr. Transome when he is engaged with you. But I have to speak to him on a matter which I shouldn't care to make public at present, and it is one on which I am sure you will back me. I heard that Mr. Transome was here, so I ventured to come. I hope you will both excuse me, as my business refers to some electioneering measures which are being taken by Mr. Transome's agents."

"Pray go on," said Harold, expecting something unpleasant.

"I'm not going to speak against treating voters," said Felix; "I suppose buttered ale, and grease of that sort to make the wheels go, belong to the necessary humbug of Representation. But I wish to ask you, Mr. Transome, whether it is with your knowledge that agents of yours are

bribing rough fellows who are no voters — the colliers and navvies at Sproxtton — with the chance of extra drunkenness, that they may make a posse on your side at the nomination and polling ? ”

“ Certainly not,” said Harold. “ You are aware, my dear sir, that a candidate is very much at the mercy of his agents as to the means by which he is returned, especially when many years’ absence has made him a stranger to the men actually conducting business. But are you sure of your facts ? ”

“ As sure as my senses can make me,” said Felix, who then briefly described what had happened on Sunday. “ I believed that you were ignorant of all this, Mr. Transome,” he ended, “ and that was why I thought some good might be done by speaking to you. If not, I should be tempted to expose the whole affair as a disgrace to the Radical party. I’m a Radical myself, and mean to work all my life long against privilege, monopoly, and oppression. But I would rather be a livery-servant proud of my master’s title, than I would seem to make common cause with scoundrels who turn the best hopes of men into by-words for cant and dishonesty.”

“ Your energetic protest is needless here, sir,” said Harold, offended at what sounded like a threat, and was certainly premature enough to be in bad taste. In fact, this error of behavior in Felix proceeded from a repulsion which was mutual. It was a constant source of irritation to him that the public men on his side were, on the whole, not conspicuously better than the public men on the other side; that the spirit of innovation, which with him was a part of religion, was in many of its mouthpieces no more of a religion than the faith in rotten boroughs; and he was thus predisposed to distrust Harold Transome. Harold, in his turn, disliked impracticable notions of loftiness and purity — disliked all enthusiasm; and he thought he saw a very troublesome, vigorous incorporation of that nonsense in Felix. But it would be foolish to exasperate him in any way.

“ If you choose to accompany me to Jermyn’s office,” he went on, “ the matter shall be inquired into in your presence. I think you will agree with me, Mr. Lyon, that this will be the most satisfactory course ? ”

“ Doubtless,” said the minister, who liked the candidate very well, and believed that he would be amenable to argument; “ and I would caution my young friend against a too great hastiness of words and action. David’s cause against

Saul was a righteous one; nevertheless not all who clave unto David were righteous men."

"The more was the pity, sir," said Felix. "Especially if he winked at their malpractices."

Mr. Lyon smiled, shook his head, and stroked his favorite's arm deprecatingly.

"It is rather too much for any man to keep the consciences of all his party," said Harold. "If you had lived in the East, as I have, you would be more tolerant. More tolerant, for example, of an active industrious selfishness, such as we have here, though it may not always be quite scrupulous: you would see how much better it is than an idle selfishness. I have heard it said, a bridge is a good thing—worth helping to make, though half the men who worked at it were rogues."

"Oh, yes!" said Felix, scornfully, "give me a handful of generalities and analogies, and I'll undertake to justify Burke and Hare, and prove them benefactors of their species. I'll tolerate no nuisances but such as I can't help; and the question now is, not whether we can do away with all the nuisances in the world, but with a particular nuisance under our noses."

"Then we had better cut the matter short, as I propose, by going at once to Jermyn's," said Harold. "In that case, I must bid you good-morning, Mr. Lyon."

"I would fain," said the minister, looking uneasy—"I would fain have had a further opportunity of considering that question of the ballot with you. The reasons against it need not be urged lengthily; they only require complete enumeration to prevent any seeming hiatus, where an opposing fallacy might thrust itself in."

"Never fear, sir," said Harold, shaking Mr. Lyon's hand cordially, "there will be opportunities. Shall I not see you in the committee-room to-morrow?"

"I think not," said Mr. Lyon, rubbing his brow, with a sad remembrance of his personal anxieties. "But I will send you, if you will permit me, a brief writing, on which you can meditate at your leisure."

"I shall be delighted. Good-by."

Harold and Felix went out together; and the minister, going up to his dull study, asked himself whether, under the pressure of conflicting experience, he had faithfully discharged the duties of the past interview?

If a cynical sprite were present, riding on one of the motes in that dusty room, he may have made himself merry at the illusions of the little minister who brought so much conscience

to bear on the production of so slight an effect. I confess to smiling myself, being sceptical as to the effect of ardent appeals and nice distinctions on gentlemen who are got up, both inside and out, as candidates in the style of the period; but I never smiled at Mr. Lyon's trustful energy without falling to penitence and veneration immediately after. For what we call illusions are often, in truth, a wider vision of past and present realities — a willing movement of a man's soul with the larger sweep of the world's forces — a movement towards a more assured end than the chances of a single life. We see human heroism broken into units and say, this unit did little — might as well not have been. But in this way we might break up a great army into units; in this way we might break the sunlight into fragments, and think that this and the other might be cheaply parted with. Let us rather raise a monument to the soldiers whose brave hearts only kept the ranks unbroken, and met death — a monument to the faithful who were not famous, and who are precious as the continuity of the sunbeams is precious, though some of them fall unseen and on barrenness.

At present, looking back on that day at Treby, it seems to me that the sadder illusion lay with Harold Transome, who was trusting in his own skill to shape the success of his own morrows, ignorant of what many yesterdays had determined for him beforehand.

CHAPTER XVII.

It is a good and soothfast saw;
Half-roasted never will be raw;
No dough is dried once more to meal,
No crock new-shapen by the wheel;
You can't turn cards to milk again,
Nor Now, by wishing, back to Then;
And having tasted stolen honey,
You can't buy innocence for money.

JERMYN was not particularly pleased that some chance had apparently hindered Harold Transome from making other canvassing visits immediately after leaving Mr. Lyon, and so had sent him back to the office earlier than he had been expected to come. The inconvenient chance he guessed at once to be represented by Felix Holt, whom he knew very well by Trebian report to be a young man with so little of the ordi

any Christain motives as to making an appearance and getting on in the world, that he presented no handle to any judicious and respectable person who might be willing to make use of him.

Harold Transome, on his side, was a good deal annoyed at being worried by Felix into an inquiry about electioneering details. The real dignity and honesty there was in him made him shrink from this necessity of satisfying a man with a troublesome tongue; it was as if he were to show indignation at the discovery of one barrel with a false bottom, when he had invested his money in a manufactory where a larger or smaller number of such barrels had always been made. A practical man must seek a good end by the only possible means; that is to say, if he is to get into Parliament he must not be too particular. It was not disgraceful to be neither a Quixote nor a theorist, aiming to correct the moral rules of the world; but whatever actually was, or might prove to be, disgraceful, Harold held in detestation. In this mood he pushed on unceremoniously to the inner office without waiting to ask questions; and when he perceived that Jermyn was not alone, he said, with haughty quickness,—

“A question about the electioneering at Sproxton. Can you give your attention to it at once? Here is Mr. Holt, who has come to me about the business.”

“A — yes — a — certainly,” said Jermyn, who, as usual, was the more cool and deliberate because he was vexed. He was standing, and, as he turned round, his broad figure concealed the person who was seated writing at the bureau. “Mr. Holt — a — will doubtless — a — make a point of saving a busy man’s time. You can speak at once. This gentleman” — here Jermyn made a slight backward movement of the head — “is one of ourselves; he is a true-blue.”

“I have simply to complain,” said Felix, “that one of your agents has been sent on a bribing expedition to Sproxton — with what purpose you, sir, may know better than I do. Mr. Transome, it appears, was ignorant of the affair, and does not approve it.”

Jermyn, looking gravely and steadily at Felix while he was speaking, at the same time drew forth a small sheaf of papers from his side-pocket, and then, as he turned his eyes slowly on Harold, felt in his waistcoat-pocket for his pencil-case.

“I don’t approve it at all,” said Harold, who hated Jermyn’s calculated slowness and conceit in his own impenetrability. “Be good enough to put a stop to it, will you?”

"Mr. Holt, I know, is an excellent Liberal," said Jermyn, just inclining his head to Harold, and then alternately looking at Felix and docketing his bills; "but he is perhaps too inexperienced to be aware that no canvass — a — can be conducted without the action of able men, who must — a — be trusted, and not interfered with. And as to any possibility of promising to put a stop — a — to any procedure — a — that depends. If he had ever held the coachman's ribbons in his hands, as I have in my younger days — a — he would know that stopping is not always easy."

"I know very little about holding ribbons," said Felix; "but I saw clearly enough at once that more mischief had been done than could be well mended. Though I believe, if it were heartily tried, the treating might be reduced, and something might be done to hinder the men from turning out in a body to make a noise, which might end in worse."

"They might be hindered from making a noise on our side," said Jermyn, smiling. "That is perfectly true. But if they made a noise on the other — would your purpose be answered better, sir?"

Harold was moving about in an irritated manner while Felix and Jermyn were speaking. He preferred leaving the talk to the attorney, of whose talk he himself liked to keep as clear as possible.

"I can only say," answered Felix, "that if you make use of those heavy fellows when the drink is in them, I shouldn't like your responsibility. You might as well drive bulls to roar on our side as bribe a set of colliers and navvies to shout and groan."

"A lawyer may well envy your command of language, Mr. Holt," said Jermyn, pocketing his bills again, and shutting up his pencil; "but he would not be satisfied with the accuracy — a — of your terms. You must permit me to check your use of the word 'bribery.' The essence of bribery is, that it should be legally proved; there is not such a thing — a — *in rerum natura* — a — as unproved bribery. There has been no such thing as bribery at Sproxton, I'll answer for it. The presence of a body of stalwart fellows on — a — the Liberal side will tend to preserve order; for we know that the benefit clubs from the Pitchley district will show for Debarry. Indeed, the gentleman who has conducted the canvass at Sproxton is experienced in Parliamentary affairs, and would not exceed — a — the necessary measures that a rational judgment would dictate."

"What! you mean the man who calls himself Johnson?" said Felix, in a tone of disgust.

Before Jermyn chose to answer, Harold broke in, saying, quickly and peremptorily, "The long and the short of it is this, Mr. Holt: I shall desire and insist that whatever can be done by way of remedy shall be done. Will that satisfy you? You see now some of a candidate's difficulties?" said Harold, breaking into his most agreeable smile. "I hope you will have some pity for me."

"I suppose I must be content," said Felix, not thoroughly propitiated. "I bid you good-morning, gentlemen."

When he was gone out, and had closed the door behind him, Harold, turning round and flashing, in spite of himself, an angry look at Jermyn, said,—

"And who is Johnson? an *alias*, I suppose. It seems you are fond of the name."

Jermyn turned perceptibly paler, but disagreeables of this sort between himself and Harold had been too much in his anticipations of late for him to be taken by surprise. He turned quietly round and just touched the shoulder of the person seated at the bureau, who now rose.

"On the contrary," Jermyn answered, "the Johnson in question is this gentleman, whom I have the pleasure of introducing to you as one of my most active helpmates in electioneering business—Mr. Johnson, of Bedford Row, London. I am comparatively a novice—a—in these matters. But he was engaged with James Putty in two hardly-contested elections, and there could scarcely be a better initiation. Putty is one of the first men of the country as an agent—a—on the Liberal side—a—eh, Johnson? I think Makepiece is—a—not altogether a match for him, not quite of the same calibre—a—*haud consimili ingenio*—a—in tactics—a—and in experience?"

"Makepiece is a wonderful man, and so is Putty," said the glib Johnson, too vain not to be pleased with an opportunity of speaking, even when the situation was rather awkward. "Makepiece for scheming, but Putty for management. Putty knows men, sir," he went on, turning to Harold; "it's a thousand pities that you have not had his talents employed in your service. He's beyond any man for saving a candidate's money—does half the work with his tongue. He'll talk of anything, from the Areopagus, and that sort of thing, down to the joke about 'Where are you going, Paddy?'—you know what I mean, sir! 'Back again, says Paddy'—an excellent

electioneering joke. Putty understands these things. He has said to me, 'Johnson, bear in mind there are two ways of speaking an audience will always like: one is, to tell them what they don't understand; and the other is, to tell them what they're used to.' I shall never be the man to deny that I owe a great deal to Putty. I always say it was a most providential thing in the Mugham election last year that Putty was not on the Tory side. He managed the women; and, if you'll believe me, sir, one-fourth of the men would never have voted if their wives hadn't driven them to it for the good of their families. And as for speaking—it's currently reported in our London circles that Putty writes regularly for the *Times*. He has that kind of language; and I needn't tell you, Mr. Transome, that it's the apex, which, I take it, means the tip-top—and nobody can get higher than that, I think. I've belonged to a political debating society myself; I've heard a little language in my time; but when Mr. Jermyn first spoke to me about having the honor to assist in your canvass of North Loamshire"—here Johnson played with his watch-seals and balanced himself a moment on his toes—"the very first thing I said was, 'And there's Garstin has got Putty! No Whig could stand against a Whig,' I said, 'who had Putty on his side: I hope Mr. Transome goes in for something of a deeper color.' I don't say that, as a general rule, opinions go for much in a return, Mr. Transome; it depends on who are in the field before you, and on the skill of your agents. But as a Radical, and a moneyed Radical, you are in a fine position, sir; and with care and judgment—with care and judgment—"

It had been impossible to interrupt Johnson before, without the most impolitic rudeness. Jermyn was not sorry that he should talk, even if he made a fool of himself; for in that solid shape, exhibiting the average amount of human foibles, he seemed less of the *alias* which Harold had insinuated him to be, and had all the additional plausibility of a lie with a circumstance.

Harold had thrown himself with contemptuous resignation into a chair, had drawn off one of his buff gloves, and was looking at his hand. But when Johnson gave his iteration with a slightly slackened pace, Harold looked up at him and broke in,—

"Well then, Mr. Johnson, I shall be glad if you will use your care and judgment in putting an end, as well as you can, to this Sproxton affair; else it may turn out an ugly business."

"Excuse me, sir; I must beg you to look at the matter a little more closely. You will see that it is impossible to take a single step backward at Sproxton. It was a matter of necessity to get the Sproxton men; else I know to a certainty the other side would have laid hold of them first, and now I've undermined Garstin's people. They'll use their authority, and give a little shabby treating, but I've taken all the wind out of their sails. But if, by your orders, I or Mr. Jermyn here were to break promise with the honest fellows, and offend Chubb the publican, what would come of it? Chubb would leave no stone unturned against you, sir; he would egg on his customers against you; the colliers and navvies would be at the nomination and at the election all the same, or rather not all the same, for they would be there against us; and instead of hustling people good-humoredly by way of a joke, and counterbalancing Debarry's cheers, they'd help to kick the cheering and the voting out of our men, and instead of being, let us say, half a dozen ahead of Garstin, you'd be half a dozen behind him, that's all. I speak plain English to you, Mr. Transome, though I've the highest respect for you as a gentleman of first-rate talents and position. But, sir, to judge of these things a man must know the English voter and the English publican; and it would be a poor tale indeed" — here Mr. Johnson's mouth took an expression at once bitter and pathetic — "that a gentleman like you, to say nothing of the good of the country, should have gone to the expense and trouble of a canvass for nothing but to find himself out of Parliament at the end of it. I've seen it again and again; it looks bad in the cleverest man to have to sing small."

Mr. Johnson's argument was not the less stringent because his idioms were vulgar. It requires a conviction and resolution amounting to heroism not to wince at phrases that class our foreshadowed endurance among those common and ignominious troubles which the world is more likely to sneer at than to pity. Harold remained a few moments in angry silence looking at the floor, with one hand on his knee and the other on his hat, as if he were preparing to start up.

"As to undoing anything that's been done down there," said Johnson, throwing in this observation as something into the bargain, "I must wash my hands of it, sir. I couldn't work knowingly against your interest. And that young man who has just gone out, — you don't believe that he need be listened to, I hope? Chubb, the publican, hates him. Chubb would guess he was at the bottom of your having the treating

stopped, and he'd set half a dozen of the colliers to duck him in the canal, or break his head by mistake. I'm an experienced man, sir. I hope I've put it clear enough."

"Certainly, the exposition befits the subject," said Harold, scornfully, his dislike of the man Johnson's personality being stimulated by causes which Jermyn more than conjectured. "It's a damned, unpleasant, ravelled business that you and Mr. Jermyn have knit up between you. I've no more to say."

"Then, sir, if you've no more commands, I don't wish to intrude. I shall wish you good-morning, sir," said Johnson, passing out quickly.

Harold knew that he was indulging his temper, and he would probably have restrained it as a foolish move if he had thought there was great danger in it. But he was beginning to drop much of his caution and self-mastery where Jermyn was concerned, under the growing conviction that the attorney had very strong reasons for being afraid of him; reasons which would only be re-enforced by any action hostile to the Transome interest. As for a sneak like this Johnson, a gentleman had to pay him, not to please him. Harold had smiles at command in the right place, but he was not going to smile when it was neither necessary nor agreeable. He was one of those good-humored, yet energetic men, who have the gift of anger, hatred, and scorn upon occasion, though they are too healthy and self-contented for such feelings to get generated in them without external occasion. And in relation to Jermyn the gift was coming into fine exercise.

"A — pardon me, Mr. Harold," said Jermyn, speaking as soon as Johnson went out, "but I am sorry — a — you should behave disobligingly to a man who has it in his power to do much service — who, in fact, holds many threads in his hands. I admit that — a — *nemo mortalium omnibus horis sapit*, as we say — a —"

"Speak for yourself," said Harold. "I don't talk in tags of Latin, which might be learned by a schoolmaster's footboy. I find the King's English express my meaning better."

"In the King's English, then," said Jermyn, who could be idiomatic enough when he was stung, "a candidate should keep his kicks till he's a member."

"Oh, I suppose Johnson will bear a kick if you bid him. You're his principal, I believe."

"Certainly, thus far — a — he is my London agent. But he is a man of substance, and —"

"I shall know what he is if it's necessary, I dare say. But

I must jump into the carriage again. I've no time to lose; I must go to Hawkins at the factory. Will you go?"

When Harold was gone, Jermyn's handsome face gathered blackness. He hardly ever wore his worst expression in the presence of others, and but seldom when he was alone, for he was not given to believe that any game would ultimately go against him. His luck had been good. New conditions might always turn up to give him new chances; and if affairs threatened to come to an extremity between Harold and himself, he trusted to finding some sure resource.

"He means to see to the bottom of everything if he can, that's quite plain," said Jermyn to himself. "I believe he has been getting another opinion; he has some new light about those annuities on the estate that are held in Johnson's name. He has inherited a deuced faculty for business — there's no denying that. But I shall beg leave to tell him that I've propped up the family. I don't know where they would have been without me; and if it comes to balancing, I know into which scale the gratitude ought to go. Not that he's likely to feel any — but he can feel something else; and if he makes signs of setting the dogs on me, I shall make him feel it. The people named Transome owe me a good deal more than I owe them."

In this way Mr. Jermyn inwardly appealed against an unjust construction which he foresaw that his old acquaintance the Law might put on certain items in his history.

I have known persons who have been suspected of undervaluing gratitude, and excluding it from the list of virtues; but on closer observation it has been seen that, if they have never felt grateful, it has been for want of an opportunity; and that, far from despising gratitude, they regard it as the virtue most of all incumbent — on others towards them.

CHAPTER XVIII.

*The little, nameless, unremembered acts
Of kindness and of love.*

WORDSWORTH : *Tintern Abbey.*

JERMYN did not forget to pay his visit to the minister in Malthouse Yard that evening. The mingled irritation, dread, and defiance which he was feeling towards Harold Transome in the middle of the day, depended on too many and far

stretching causes to be dissipated by eight o'clock ; but when he left Mr. Lyon's house he was in a state of comparative triumph in the belief that he, and he alone, was now in possession of facts which, once grouped together, made a secret that gave him new power over Harold.

Mr. Lyon, in his need for help from one who had that wisdom of the serpent which, he argued, is not forbidden, but is only of hard acquirement to dove-like innocence, had been gradually led to pour out to the attorney all the reasons which made him desire to know the truth about the man who called himself Maurice Christian : he had shown all the precious relics, the locket, the letters, and the marriage certificate. And Jermyn had comforted him by confidently promising to ascertain, without scandal or premature betrayals, whether this man were really Annette's husband, Maurice Christian Bycliffe.

Jermyn was not rash in making this promise, since he had excellent reasons for believing that he had already come to a true conclusion on the subject. But he wished both to know a little more of this man himself, and to keep Mr. Lyon in ignorance — not a difficult precaution — in an affair which it cost the minister so much pain to speak of. An easy opportunity of getting an interview with Christian was sure to offer itself before long — might even offer itself to-morrow. Jermyn had seen him more than once, though hitherto without any reason for observing him with interest ; he had heard that Philip Debarry's courier was often busy in the town, and it seemed especially likely that he would be seen there when the Market was to be agitated by politics, and the new candidate was to show his paces.

The world of which Treby Magna was the centre was naturally curious to see the young Transome, who had come from the East, was as rich as a Jew, and called himself a Radical ; characteristics all equally vague in the minds of various excellent ratepayers, who drove to market in their taxed carts, or in their hereditary gigs. Places at convenient windows had been secured beforehand for a few best bonnets ; but, in general, a Radical candidate excited no ardent feminine partisanship, even among the Dissenters in Treby, if they were of the prosperous and long-resident class. Some chapel-going ladies were fond of remembering that "their family had been Church ;" others objected to politics altogether as having spoiled old neighborliness, and sundered friends who had kindred views as to cowslip wine and Michaelmas cleaning ; others,

of the melancholy sort, said it would be well if people would think less of reforming Parliament and more of pleasing God. Irreproachable Dissenting matrons, like Mrs. Muscat, whose youth had been passed in a short-waisted bodice and tight skirt, had never been animated by the struggle for liberty, and had a timid suspicion that religion was desecrated by being applied to the things of this world. Since Mr. Lyon had been in Malthouse Yard there had been far too much mixing up of politics with religion; but, at any rate, these ladies had never yet been to hear speechifying in the market-place, and they were not going to begin that practice.

Esther, however, had heard some of her feminine acquaintances say that they intended to sit at the druggist's upper window, and she was inclined to ask her father if he could think of a suitable place where she also might see and hear. Two inconsistent motives urged her. She knew that Felix cared earnestly for all public questions, and she supposed that he held it one of her deficiencies not to care about them: well, she would try to learn the secret of this ardor, which was so strong in him that it animated what she thought the dulllest form of life. She was not too stupid to find it out. But this self-correcting motive was presently displaced by a motive of a different sort. It had been a pleasant variety in her monotonous days to see a man like Harold Transome, with a distinguished appearance and polished manners, and she would like to see him again: he suggested to her that brighter and more luxurious life on which her imagination dwelt without the painful effort it required to conceive the mental condition which would place her in complete sympathy with Felix Holt. It was this less unaccustomed prompting of which she was chiefly conscious when she awaited her father's coming down to breakfast. Why, indeed, should she trouble herself so much about Felix?

Mr. Lyon, more serene now that he had unbosomed his anxieties and obtained a promise of help, was already swimming so happily in the deep water of polemics in expectation of Philip Debarry's answer to his challenge, that, in the occupation of making a few notes lest certain felicitous inspirations should be wasted, he had forgotten to come down to breakfast. Esther, suspecting his abstraction, went up to his study, and found him at his desk looking up with wonder at her interruption.

"Come, father, you have forgotten your breakfast."

"It is true, child; I will come," he said, lingering to make some final strokes.

"Oh you naughty father!" said Esther, as he got up from his chair, "your coat-collar is twisted, your waistcoat is buttoned all wrong, and you have not brushed your hair. Sit down and let me brush it again as I did yesterday."

He sat down obediently, while Esther took a towel, which she threw over his shoulders, and then brushed the thick long fringe of soft auburn hair. This very trifling act, which she had brought herself to for the first time yesterday, meant a great deal in Esther's little history. It had been her habit to leave the mending of her father's clothes to Lyddy; she had not liked even to touch his cloth garments; still less had it seemed a thing she would willingly undertake to correct his toilet and use a brush for him. But having once done this, under her new sense of faulty omission, the affectionateness that was in her flowered so pleasantly, as she saw how much her father was moved by what he thought a great act of tenderness, that she quite longed to repeat it. This morning, as he sat under her hands, his face had such a calm delight in it that she could not help kissing the top of his bald head; and afterwards, when they were seated at breakfast, she said, merrily, —

"Father, I shall make a *petit maître* of you by and by; your hair looks so pretty and silken when it is well brushed."

"Nay, child, I trust that while I would willingly depart from my evil habit of a somewhat slovenly forgetfulness in my attire, I shall never arrive at the opposite extreme. For though there is that in apparel which pleases the eye, and I deny not that your neat gown and the color thereof — which is that of certain little flowers that spread themselves in the hedgerows, and make a blueness there as of the sky when it is deepened in the water, — I deny not, I say, that these minor strivings after a perfection which is, as it were, an irrecoverable yet haunting memory, are a good in their proportion. Nevertheless, the brevity of our life, and the hurry and crush of the great battle with error and sin, often oblige us to an advised neglect of what is less momentous. This, I conceive, is the principle on which my friend Felix Holt acts; and I cannot but think the light comes from the true fount, though it shines through obstructions."

"You have not seen Mr. Holt since Sunday, have you, father?"

"Yes; he was here yesterday. He sought Mr. Transome, having a matter of some importance to speak upon with him. And I saw him afterward in the street, when he agreed that I

should call for him this morning before I go into the market-place. He will have it," Mr. Lyon went on, smiling, "that I must not walk about in the crowd without him to act as my special constable."

Esther felt vexed with herself that her heart was suddenly beating with unusual quickness, and that her last resolution not to trouble herself about what Felix thought, had transformed itself with magic swiftness into mortification that he evidently avoided coming to the house when she was there, though he used to come on the slightest occasion. He knew that she was always at home until the afternoon on market-days; that was the reason why he would not call for her father. Of course, it was because he attributed such littleness to her that he supposed she would retain nothing else than a feeling of offence towards him for what he had said to her. Such distrust of any good in others, such arrogance of immeasurable superiority, was extremely ungenerous. But presently she said, —

"I should have liked to hear Mr. Transome speak, but I suppose it is too late to get a place now."

"I am not sure; I would fain have you go if you desire it, my dear," said Mr. Lyon, who could not bear to deny Esther any lawful wish. "Walk with me to Mistress Holt's, and we will learn from Felix, who will doubtless already have been out, whether he could lead you in safety to Friend Lambert's."

Esther was glad of the proposal, because, if it answered no other purpose, it would be an easy way of obliging Felix to see her, and of showing him that it was not she who cherished offence. But when, later in the morning, she was walking towards Mrs. Holt's with her father, they met Mr. Jermyn, who stopped them to ask, in his most affable manner, whether Miss Lyon intended to hear the candidate, and whether she had secured a suitable place. And he ended by insisting that his daughters, who were presently coming in an open carriage, should call for her, if she would permit them. It was impossible to refuse this civility, and Esther turned back to await the carriage, pleased with the certainty of hearing and seeing, yet sorry to miss Felix. There was another day for her to think of him with unsatisfied resentment, mixed with some longings for a better understanding; and in our springtime every day has its hidden growths in the mind, as it has in the earth when the little folded blades are getting ready to pierce the ground.

CHAPTER XIX.

Consistency? — I never changed my mind,
Which is, and always was, to live at ease.

It was only in the time of the summer fairs that the market-place had ever looked more animated than it did under that autumn mid-day sun. There were plenty of blue cockades and streamers, faces at all the windows, and a crushing buzzing crowd, urging each other backwards and forwards round the small hustings in front of the Ram Inn, which showed its more plebeian sign at right angles with the venerable Marquis of Granby. Sometimes there were scornful shouts, sometimes a rolling cascade of cheers, sometimes the shriek of a penny whistle; but above all these fitful and feeble sounds, the fine old church-tower, which looked down from above the trees on the other side of the narrow stream, sent vibrating, at every quarter, the sonorous tones of its great bell, the Good Queen Bess.

Two carriages, with blue ribbons on the harness, were conspicuous near the hustings. One was Jermyn's, filled with the brilliantly attired daughters, accompanied by Esther, whose quieter dress helped to mark her out for attention as the most striking of the group. The other was Harold Transome's; but in this there was no lady—only the olive-skinned Dominic, whose acute yet mild face was brightened by the occupation of amusing little Harry and rescuing from his tyrannies a King Charles puppy, with big eyes, much after the pattern of the boy's.

This Trebian crowd did not count for much in the political force of the nation, but it was not the less determined as to lending or not lending its ears. No man was permitted to speak from the platform except Harold and his uncle Lingon, though, in the interval of expectation, several Liberals had come forward. Among these ill-advised persons the one whose attempt met the most emphatic resistance was Rufus Lyon. This might have been taken for resentment at the unreasonableness of the cloth, that, not content with pulpits, from whence to tyrannize over the ears of men, wishes to have the larger share of the platforms; but it was not so, for Mr.

Lingon was heard with much cheering, and would have been welcomed again.

The Rector of Little Treby had been a favorite in the neighborhood since the beginning of the century. A clergyman thoroughly unclerical in his habits had a piquancy about him which made him a sort of practical joke. He had always been called Jack Lingon, or Parson Jack — sometimes, in colder and less serious days, even “Cock-fighting Jack.” He swore a little when the point of a joke seemed to demand it, and was fond of wearing a colored bandana tied loosely over his cravat, together with large brown leather leggings; he spoke in a pithy familiar way that people could understand, and had none of that frigid mincingness called dignity, which some have thought a peculiar clerical disease. In fact, he was “a charicter” — something cheerful to think of, not entirely out of connection with Sunday and sermons. And it seemed in keeping that he should have turned sharp round in politics, his opinions being only part of the excellent joke called Parson Jack. When his red eagle face and white hair were seen on the platform, the Dissenters hardly cheered this questionable Radical; but to make amends, all the Tory farmers gave him a friendly “hurrah.” “Let’s hear what old Jack will say for himself,” was the predominant feeling among them; “he’ll have something funny to say, I’ll bet a penny.”

It was only Lawyer Labron’s young clerks and their hangers-on who were sufficiently dead to Trebian traditions to assail the parson with various sharp-edged interjections, such as broken shells, and cries of “Cock-a-doodle-doo.”

“Come now, my lads,” he began, in his full, pompous, yet jovial tones, thrusting his hands into the stuffed-out pockets of his greatcoat, “I’ll tell you what; I’m a parson, you know; I ought to return good for evil. So here are some good nuts for you to crack in return for your shells.”

There was a roar of laughter and cheering as he threw handfuls of nuts and filberts among the crowd.

“Come now, you’ll say I used to be a Tory; and some of you, whose faces I know as well as I know the head of my own crab-stick, will say that’s why I’m a good fellow. But now I’ll tell you something else. It’s for that very reason — that I used to be a Tory, and am a good fellow — that I go along with my nephew here, who is a thorough-going Liberal. For will anybody here come forward and say, ‘A good fellow has no need to tack about and change his road’? No, there’s

not one of you such a Tom-noddy. What's good for one time is bad for another. If anybody contradicts that, ask him to eat pickled pork when he's thirsty, and to bathe in the Lapp there when the spikes of ice are shooting. And that's the reason why the men who are the best Liberals now are the very men who used to be the best Tories. There isn't a nastier horse than your horse that'll jib and back and turn round when there is but one road for him to go, and that's the road before him.

"And my nephew here — he comes of a Tory breed, you know — I'll answer for the Lingons. In the old Tory times there was never a pup belonging to a Lingon but would howl if a Whig came near him. The Lingon blood is good, rich, old Tory blood — like good rich milk — and that's why, when the right time comes, it throws up a Liberal cream. The best sort of a Tory turns to the best sort of Radical. There's plenty of Radical scum — I say, beware of the scum, and look out for the cream. And here's my nephew — some of the cream if there is any: none of your Whigs, none of your painted water that looks as if it ran, and it's standing still all the while; none of your spinning-jenny fellows. A gentleman; but up to all sorts of business. I'm no fool myself; I'm forced to wink a good deal, for fear of seeing too much, for a neighborly man must let himself be cheated a little. But though I've never been out of my own country, I know less about it than my nephew does. You may tell what he is, and only look at him. There's one sort of fellow sees nothing but the end of his own nose, and another sort that sees nothing but the hinder side of the moon; but my nephew Harold is of another sort; he sees everything that's at hitting distance, and he's not one to miss his mark. A good-looking man in his prime! Not a greenhorn; not a shrivelled old fellow, who'll come to speak to you and find he's left his teeth at home by mistake. Harold Transome will do you credit; if anybody says the Radicals are a set of sneaks, Brummagem halfpennies, scamps who want to play pitch-and-toss with the property of the country, you can say, 'Look at the member for North Loamshire!' And mind what you'll hear him say; he'll go in for making everything right — Poor-laws and Charities and Church — he wants to reform 'em all. Perhaps you'll say, 'There's that Parson Lingon talking about Church Reform — why, he belongs to the Church himself — he wants reforming too.' Well, well, wait a bit, and you'll hear by and by that old Parson Lingon is reformed — shoots no more, cracks his joke no more, has drunk his last bottle: the dogs,

the old pointers, will be sorry; but you'll hear that the Parson at Little Treby is a new man. That's what the Church Reform is sure to come to before long. So now here are some more nuts for you, lads, and I leave you to listen to your candidate. Here he is — give him a good hurray; wave your hats, and I'll begin. Hurrahy!"

Harold had not been quite confident beforehand as to the good effect of his uncle's introduction; but he was soon reassured. There was no acrid partisanship among the old-fashioned Tories who mustered strong about the Marquis of Granby, and Parson Jack had put them in a good humor. Harold's only interruption came from his own party. The oratorical clerk at the Factory, acting as the tribune of the Dissenting interest, and feeling bound to put questions, might have been troublesome; but his voice being unpleasantly sharp, while Harold's was full and penetrating, the questioning was cried down. Harold's speech "did:" it was not of the glib-nonsensical sort, not ponderous, not hesitating — which is as much as to say, that it was remarkable among British speeches. Read in print the next day, perhaps it would be neither pregnant nor conclusive, which is saying no more than that its excellence was not of an abnormal kind, but such as is usually found in the best efforts of eloquent candidates. Accordingly the applause drowned the opposition, and content predominated.

But, perhaps, the moment of most diffusive pleasure from public speaking is that in which the speech ceases and the audience can turn to commenting on it. The one speech, sometimes uttered under great responsibility as to missiles and other consequences, has given a text to twenty speakers who are under no responsibility. Even in the days of duelling a man was not challenged for being a bore, nor does this quality apparently hinder him from being much invited to dinner, which is the great index of social responsibility in a less barbarous age.

Certainly the crowd in the market-place seemed to experience this culminating enjoyment when the speaking on the platform in front of the Ram had ceased, and there were no less than three orators holding forth from the elevation of chance vehicles, not at all to the prejudice of the talking among those who were on a level with their neighbors. There was little ill-humor among the listeners, for Queen Bess was striking the last quarter before two, and a savory smell from the inn kitchens inspired them with an agreeable con-

sciousness that the speakers were helping to trifle away the brief time before dinner.

Two or three of Harold's committee had lingered talking to each other on the platform, instead of re-entering; and Jermyn, after coming out to speak to one of them, had turned to the corner near which the carriages were standing, that he might tell the Transomes' coachman to drive round to the side door, and signal to his own coachman to follow. But a dialogue which was going on below induced him to pause, and, instead of giving the order, to assume the air of a careless gazer. Christian, whom the attorney had already observed looking out of a window at the Marquis of Granby, was talking to Dominic. The meeting appeared to be one of new recognition, for Christian was saying, —

"You've not got gray as I have, Mr. Lenoni; you're not a day older for the sixteen years. But no wonder you didn't know me; I'm bleached like a dried bone."

"Not so. It is true I was confused a meenute — I could put your face nowhere; but after that, Naples came behind it, and I said, Mr. Creestian. And so you reside at the Manor, and I am at Transome Court."

"Ah! it's a thousand pities you're not on our side, else we might have dined together at the Marquis," said Christian. "Eh, could you manage it?" he added, languidly, knowing there was no chance of a yes.

"No — much obliged — couldn't leave the leetle boy. Ah! Arry, Arry, pinch not poor Moro."

While Dominic was answering, Christian had stared about him, as his manner was when he was being spoken to, and had had his eyes arrested by Esther, who was leaning forward to look at Mr. Harold Transome's extraordinary little gypsy of a son. But happening to meet Christian's stare, she felt annoyed, drew back, and turned away her head, coloring.

"Who are those ladies?" said Christian, in a low tone, to Dominic, as if he had been startled into a sudden wish for this information.

"They are Meester Jermyn's daughters," said Dominic, who knew nothing either of the lawyer's family or of Esther.

Christian looked puzzled a moment or two, and was silent.

"Oh, well — *au revoir*," he said, kissing the tips of his fingers, as the coachman, having had Jermyn's order, began to urge on the horses.

"Does he see some likeness in the girl?" thought Jermyn, as he turned away. "I wish I hadn't invited her to come in the carriage, as it happens."

CHAPTER XX.

"Good earthenware pitchers, sir!—of an excellent quaint pattern and sober color."

THE market dinner at "the Marquis" was in high repute in Treby and its neighborhood. The frequenters of this three-and-sixpenny ordinary liked to allude to it, as men allude to anything which implies that they move in good society, and habitually converse with those who are in the secret of the highest affairs. The guests were not only such rural residents as had driven to market, but some of the most substantial townsmen, who had always assured their wives that business required this weekly sacrifice of domestic pleasure. The poorer farmers, who put up at the Ram or the Seven Stars, where there was no fish, felt their disadvantage, bearing it modestly or bitterly, as the case might be; and although the Marquis was a Tory house, devoted to Debarry, it was too much to expect that such tenants of the Transomes as had always been used to dine there, should consent to eat a worse dinner, and sit with worse company, because they suddenly found themselves under a Radical landlord, opposed to the political party known as Sir Maxim's. Hence the recent political divisions had not reduced the handsome length of the table at the Marquis; and the many gradations of dignity—from Mr. Wace, the brewer, to the rich butcher from Leek Malton, who always modestly took the lowest seat, though without the reward of being asked to come up higher—had not been abbreviated by any secessions.

To-day there was an extra table spread for expected supernumeraries, and it was at this that Christian took his place with some of the younger farmers, who had almost a sense of dissipation in talking to a man of his questionable station and unknown experience. The provision was especially liberal, and on the whole the presence of a minority destined to vote for Transome was a ground for joking, which added to the good-humor of the chief talkers. A respectable old acquaintance turned Radical rather against his will, was rallied with even greater gusto than if his wife had had twins twice over. The best Trebian Tories were far too sweet-blooded to turn

against such old friends, and to make no distinction between them and the Radical, Dissenting, Papistical, Deistical set with whom they never dined, and probably never saw except in their imagination. But the talk was necessarily in abeyance until the more serious business of dinner was ended, and the wine, spirits, and tobacco raised mere satisfaction into beatitude.

Among the frequent though not regular guests, whom every one was glad to see, was Mr. Nolan, the retired London hosier, a wiry old gentleman past seventy, whose square tight forehead, with its rigid hedge of gray hair, whose bushy eyebrows, sharp dark eyes, and remarkable hooked nose, gave a handsome distinction to his face in the midst of rural physiognomies. He had married a Miss Pendrell early in life, when he was a poor young Londoner, and the match had been thought as bad as ruin by her family; but fifteen years ago he had had the satisfaction of bringing his wife to settle amongst her own friends, and of being received with pride as a brother-in-law, retired from business, possessed of unknown thousands, and of a most agreeable talent for anecdote and conversation generally. No question had ever been raised as to Mr. Nolan's extraction on the strength of his hooked nose, or of his name being Baruch. Hebrew names "ran" in the best Saxon families; the Bible accounted for them; and no one among the uplands and hedgerows of that district was suspected of having an Oriental origin unless he carried a pedlar's jewel-box. Certainly, whatever genealogical research might have been discovered, the worthy Baruch Nolan was so free from any distinctive marks of religious persuasion — he went to church with so ordinary an irregularity, and so often grumbled at the sermon — that there was no ground for classing him otherwise than with good Trebian Churchmen. He was generally regarded as a good-looking old gentleman, and a certain thin eagerness in his aspect was attributed to the life of the metropolis, where narrow space had the same sort of effect on men as on thickly-planted trees. Mr. Nolan always ordered his pint of port, which, after he had sipped it a little, was wont to animate his recollections of the Royal Family, and the various ministries which had been contemporary with the successive stages of his prosperity. He was always listened to with interest: a man who had been born in the year when good old King George came to the throne — who had been acquainted with the nude leg of the Prince Regent, and hinted at private reasons for believing that the Princess

Charlotte ought not to have died — had conversational matter as special to his auditors as Marco Polo could have had on his return from Asiatic travel.

"My good sir," he said to Mr. Wace, as he crossed his knees and spread his silk handkerchief over them, "Transome may be returned, or he may not be returned — that's a question for North Loamshire; but it makes little difference to the kingdom. I don't want to say things which may put younger men out of spirits, but I believe this country has seen its best days — I do indeed."

"I am sorry to hear it from one of your experience, Mr. Nolan," said the brewer, a large, happy-looking man. "I'd make a good fight myself before I'd leave a worse world for my boys than I've found for myself. There isn't a greater pleasure than doing a bit of planting and improving one's buildings, and investing one's money in some pretty acres of land, when it turns up here and there — land you've known from a boy. It's a nasty thought that these Radicals are to turn things round so as one can calculate on nothing. One doesn't like it for one's self, and one doesn't like it for one's neighbors. But somehow, I believe it won't do: if we can't trust the Government just now, there's Providence and the good sense of the country; and there's a right in things — that's what I've always said — there's a right in things. The heavy end will get downmost. And if Church and King, and every man being sure of his own, are things good for this country, there's a God above will take care of 'em."

"It won't do, my dear sir," said Mr. Nolan — "it won't do. When Peel and the Duke turned round about the Catholics in '29, I saw it was all over with us. We could never trust ministers any more. It was to keep off a rebellion, they said; but I say it was to keep their places. They're monstrously fond of place, both of them — that I know." Here Mr. Nolan changed the crossing of his legs, and gave a deep cough, conscious of having made a point. Then he went on — "What we want is a king with a good will of his own. If we'd had that, we shouldn't have heard what we've heard to-day; Reform would never have come to this pass. When our good old King George the Third heard his ministers talking about Catholic Emancipation, he boxed their ears all round. Ah, poor soul! he did indeed, gentlemen," ended Mr. Nolan, shaken by a deep laugh of admiration.

"Well, now, that's something like a king," said Mr. Crowder, who was an eager listener.

"It was uncivil, though. How did they take it?" said Mr. Timothy Rose, a "gentleman farmer" from Leek Malton, against whose independent position nature had provided the safeguard of a spontaneous servility. His large porcine cheeks, round twinkling eyes, and thumbs habitually twirling, expressed a concentrated effort not to get into trouble, and to speak everybody fair except when they were safely out of hearing.

"Take it! they'd be obliged to take it," said the impetuous young Joyce, a farmer of superior information. "Have you ever heard of the king's prerogative?"

"I don't say but what I have," said Rose, retreating. "I've nothing against it — nothing at all."

"No, but the Radicals have," said young Joyce, winking. "The prerogative is what they want to clip close. They want us to be governed by delegates from the trades-unions, who are to dictate to everybody, and make everything square to their mastery."

"They're a pretty set, now, those delegates," said Mr. Wace, with disgust. "I once heard two of 'em spouting away. They're a sort of fellow I'd never employ in my brewery, or anywhere else. I've seen it again and again. If a man takes to tongue-work it's all over with him. 'Everything's wrong,' says he. That's a big text. But does he want to make everything right? Not he. He'd lose his text. 'We want every man's good,' say they. Why, they never knew yet what a man's good is. How should they? It's working for his victual — not getting a slice of other people's."

"Ay, ay," said young Joyce, cordially. "I should just have liked all the delegates in the country mustered for our yeomanry to go into — that's all. They'd see where the strength of Old England lay then. You may tell what it is for a country to trust to trade when it breeds such spindling fellows as those."

"That isn't the fault of trade, my good sir," said Mr. Nolan, who was often a little pained by the defects of provincial culture. "Trade, properly conducted, is good for a man's constitution. I could have shown you, in my time, weavers past seventy, with all their faculties as sharp as a penknife, doing without spectacles. It's the new system of trade that's to blame: a country can't have too much trade if it's properly managed. Plenty of sound Tories have made their fortune by trade. You've heard of Calibut & Co. — everybody has heard of Calibut. Well, sir, I knew old Mr. Calibut as well as I

know you. He was once a crony of mine in a city warehouse; and now, I'll answer for it, he has a larger rent-roll than Lord Wyvern. Bless your soul! his subscriptions to charities would make a fine income for a nobleman. And he's as good a Tory as I am. And as for his town establishment—why, how much butter do you think is consumed there annually?"

Mr. Nolan paused, and then his face glowed with triumph as he answered his own question. "Why, gentlemen, not less than two thousand pounds of butter during the few months the family is in town! Trade makes property, my good sir, and property is Conservative, as they say now. Calibut's son-in-law is Lord Fortinbras. He paid me a large debt on his marriage. It's all one web, sir. The prosperity of the country is one web."

"To be sure," said Christian, who, smoking his cigar with his chair turned away from the table, was willing to make himself agreeable in the conversation. "We can't do without nobility. Look at France. When they got rid of the old nobles they were obliged to make new."

"True, very true," said Mr. Nolan, who thought Christian a little too wise for his position, but could not resist the rare gift of an instance in point. "It's the French Revolution that has done us harm here. It was the same at the end of the last century, but the war kept it off—Mr. Pitt saved us. I knew Mr. Pitt. I had a particular interview with him once. He joked me about getting the length of his foot. 'Mr. Nolan,' said he, 'there are those on the other side of the water whose name begins with N. who would be glad to know what you know.' I was recommended to send an account of that to the newspapers after his death, poor man! but I'm not fond of that kind of show myself." Mr. Nolan swung his upper leg a little, and pinched his lip between his thumb and finger, naturally pleased with his own moderation.

"No, no—very right," said Mr. Wace, cordially. "But you never said a truer word than that about property. If a man's got a bit of property, a stake in the country, he'll want to keep things square. Where Jack isn't safe, Tom's in danger. But that's what makes it such an uncommonly nasty thing that a man like Transome should take up with these Radicals. It's my belief he does it only to get into Parliament; he'll turn round when he gets there. Come, Dibbs, there's something to put you in spirits," added Mr. Wace, raising his voice a little and looking at a guest lower down. "You've got to vote for a Radical with one side of your

mouth, and make a wry face with the other; but he'll turn round by and by. As Parson Jack says, he's got the right sort of blood in him."

"I don't care two straws who I vote for," said Dibbs, sturdily. "I'm not going to make a wry face. It stands to reason a man should vote for his landlord. My farm's in good condition, and I've got the best pasture on the estate. The rot's never come nigh me. Let them grumble as are on the wrong side of the hedge."

"I wonder if Jermyn 'll bring him in, though," said Mr. Sircome, the great miller. "He's an uncommon fellow for carrying things through. I know he brought me through that suit about my weir; it cost a pretty penny, but he brought me through."

"It's a bit of a pill for him, too, having to turn Radical," said Mr. Wace. "They say he counted on making friends with Sir Maximus, by this young one coming home and joining with Mr. Philip."

"But I'll bet a penny he brings Transome in," said Mr. Sircome. "Folks say he hasn't got many votes hereabout; but towards Duffield, and all there, where the Radicals are, everybody's for him. Eh, Mr. Christian? Come — you're at the fountainhead — what do they say about it now at the Manor?"

When general attention was called to Christian, young Joyce looked down at his own legs and touched the curves of his own hair, as if measuring his own approximation to that correct copy of a gentleman. Mr. Wace turned his head to listen for Christian's answer with that tolerance of inferiority which becomes men in places of public resort.

"They think it will be a hard run between Transome and Garstin," said Christian. "It depends on Transome's getting plumpers."

"Well, I know I shall not split for Garstin," said Mr. Wace. "It's nonsense for Debarry's voters to split for a Whig. A man's either a Tory or not a Tory."

"It seems reasonable there should be one of each side," said Mr. Timothy Rose. "I don't like showing favor either way. If one side can't lower the poor's rates and take off the tithe, let the other try."

"But there's this in it, Wace," said Mr. Sircome. "I'm not altogether against the Whigs. For they don't want to go so far as the Radicals do, and when they find they've slipped a bit too far, they'll hold on all the tighter. And the Whigs

have got the upper hand now, and it's no use fighting with the current. I run with the — ”

Mr. Sircome checked himself, looked furtively at Christian, and, to divert criticism, ended with — “eh, Mr. Nolan ? ”

“There have been eminent Whigs, sir. Mr. Fox was a Whig,” said Mr. Nolan. “Mr. Fox was a great orator. He gambled a good deal. He was very intimate with the Prince of Wales. I’ve seen him, and the Duke of York too, go home by daylight with their hats crushed. Mr. Fox was a great leader of Opposition: Government requires an Opposition. The Whigs should always be in opposition, and the Tories on the ministerial side. That’s what the country used to like. ‘The Whigs for salt and mustard, the Tories for meat,’ Mr. Gottlib the banker used to say to me. Mr. Gottlib was a worthy man. When there was a great run on Gottlib’s bank in ’16, I saw a gentleman come in with bags of gold, and say, ‘Tell Mr. Gottlib there’s plenty more where that came from.’ It stopped the run, gentlemen—it did indeed.”

This anecdote was received with great admiration, but Mr. Sircome returned to the previous question.

“There now, you see, Wace—it’s right there should be Whigs as well as Tories—Pit and Fox—I’ve always heard them go together.”

“Well, I don’t like Garstin,” said the brewer. “I didn’t like his conduct about the Canal Company. Of the two, I like Transome best. If a nag is to throw me, I say, let him have some blood.”

“As for blood, Wace,” said Mr. Salt, the wool-factor, a bilious man, who only spoke when there was a good opportunity of contradicting, “ask my brother-in-law Labron a little about that. These Transomes are not the old blood.”

“Well, they’re the oldest that’s forthcoming, I suppose,” said Mr. Wace, laughing. “Unless you believe in mad old Tommy Trounsem. I wonder where that old poaching fellow is now.”

“I saw him half-drunk the other day,” said young Joyce. “He’d got a flag-basket with handbills in it over his shoulder.”

“I thought the old fellow was dead,” said Mr. Wace. “Hey! why, Jermyn,” he went on merrily, as he turned round and saw the attorney entering; “you Radical! how dare you show yourself in this Tory house? Come, this is going a bit too far. We don’t mind Old Harry managing our law for us—that’s his proper business from time immemorial; but — ”

"But — a —" said Jermyn, smiling, always ready to carry on a joke, to which his slow manner gave the piquancy of surprise, "if he meddles with politics he must be a Tory."

Jermyn was not afraid to show himself anywhere in Treby. He knew many people were not exactly fond of him, but a man can do without that, if he is prosperous. A provincial lawyer in those old-fashioned days was as independent of personal esteem as if he had been a Lord Chancellor.

There was a good-humored laugh at this upper end of the room as Jermyn seated himself at about an equal angle between Mr. Wace and Christian.

"We were talking about old Tommy Trounsem; you remember him? They say he's turned up again," said Mr. Wace.

"Ah?" said Jermyn, indifferently. "But — a — Wace — I'm very busy to-day — but I wanted to see you about that bit of land of yours at the corner of Pod's End. I've had a handsome offer for you — I'm not at liberty to say from whom — but an offer that ought to tempt you."

"It won't tempt me," said Mr. Wace, peremptorily; "if I've got a bit of land, I'll keep it. It's hard enough to get hereabouts."

"Then I'm to understand that you refuse all negotiation?" said Jermyn, who had ordered a glass of sherry, and was looking round slowly as he sipped it, till his eyes seemed to rest for the first time on Christian, though he had seen him at once on entering the room.

"Unless one of the confounded railways should come. But then I'll stand out and make 'em bleed for it."

There was a murmur of approbation; the railways were a public wrong much denounced in Treby.

"A — Mr. Philip Debarry at the Manor now?" said Jermyn, suddenly questioning Christian, in a haughty tone of superiority which he often chose to use.

"No," said Christian, "he is expected to-morrow morning."

"Ah! —" Jermyn paused a moment or two, and then said "You are sufficiently in his confidence, I think, to carry a message to him with a small document?"

"Mr. Debarry has often trusted me so far," said Christian, with much coolness; "but if the business is yours, you can probably find some one you know better."

There was a little winking and grimacing among those of the company who heard this answer.

"A — true — a," said Jermyn, not showing any offence; "if you decline. But I think, if you will do me the favor to step

round to my residence on your way back, and learn the business, you will prefer carrying it yourself. At my residence, if you please — not my office."

"Oh very well," said Christian. "I shall be very happy." Christian never allowed himself to be treated as a servant by any one but his master, and his master treated a servant more deferentially than an equal.

"Will it be five o'clock? what hour shall we say?" said Jermyn.

Christian looked at his watch and said, "About five I can be there."

"Very good," said Jermyn, finishing his sherry.

"Well — a — Wace — a — so you will hear nothing about Pod's End?"

"Not I."

"A mere pocket-handkerchief, not enough to swear by — a —" here Jermyn's face broke into a smile — "without a magnifying-glass."

"Never mind. It's mine into the bowels of the earth and up to the sky. I can build the Tower of Babel on it if I like — eh, Mr. Nolan?"

"A bad investment, my good sir," said Mr. Nolan, who enjoyed a certain flavor of infidelity in this smart reply, and laughed much at it in his inward way.

"See now, how blind you Tories are," said Jermyn, rising; "if I had been your lawyer, I'd have had you make another forty-shilling freeholder with that land, and all in time for this election. But — a — the *verbum sapientibus* comes a little too late now."

Jermyn was moving away as he finished speaking, but Mr. Wace called out after him, "We're not so badly off for votes as you are — good sound votes, that'll stand the Revising Barrister. Debarry at the top of the poll!"

The lawyer was already out of the doorway.

CHAPTER XXI.

'Tis grievous, that with all amplification of travel both by sea and land, a man can never separate himself from his past history.

MR. JERMYN'S handsome house stood a little way out of the town, surrounded by garden and lawn and plantations of hopeful trees. As Christian approached it he was in a perfectly easy state of mind: the business he was going on was none of his, otherwise than as he was well satisfied with any opportunity of making himself valuable to Mr. Philip Debarry. As he looked at Jermyn's length of wall and iron railing, he said to himself, "These lawyers are the fellows for getting on in the world with the least expense of civility. With this cursed conjuring secret of theirs called Law, they think everybody is frightened at them. My Lord Jermyn seems to have his insolence as ready as his soft sawder. He's as sleek as a rat, and has as vicious a tooth. I know the sort of vermin well enough. I've helped to fatten one or two."

In this mood of conscious, contemptuous penetration, Christian was shown by the footman into Jermyn's private room, where the attorney sat surrounded with massive oaken book-cases, and other furniture to correspond, from the thickest-legged library-table to the calendar frame and card-rack. It was the sort of room a man prepares for himself when he feels sure of a long and respectable future. He was leaning back in his leather chair, against the broad window opening on the lawn, and had just taken off his spectacles and let the newspaper fall on his knees, in despair of reading by the fading light.

When the footman opened the door and said, "Mr. Christian," Jermyn said, "Good-evening, Mr. Christian. Be seated," pointing to a chair opposite himself and the window. "Light the candles on the shelf, John, but leave the blinds alone."

He did not speak again till the man was gone out, but appeared to be referring to a document which lay on the bureau before him. When the door was closed he drew himself up again, began to rub his hands, and turned towards his visitor, who seemed perfectly indifferent to the fact that the attorney was in shadow, and that the light fell on himself."

"A — your name — a — is Henry Scaddon."

There was a start through Christian's frame which he was quick enough, almost simultaneously, to try and disguise as a change of position. He uncrossed his legs and unbuttoned his coat. But before he had time to say anything, Jermyn went on with slow emphasis.

"You were born on the 16th of December 1782, at Blackheath. Your father was a cloth-merchant in London: he died when you were barely of age, leaving an extensive business; before you were five and twenty you had run through the greater part of the property, and had compromised your safety by an attempt to defraud your creditors. Subsequently you forged a check on your father's elder brother, who had intended to make you his heir."

Here Jermyn paused a moment and referred to the document. Christian was silent.

"In 1808 you found it expedient to leave this country in a military disguise, and were taken prisoner by the French. On the occasion of an exchange of prisoners you had the opportunity of returning to your own country, and to the bosom of your own family. You were generous enough to sacrifice that prospect in favor of a fellow-prisoner, of about your own age and figure, who had more pressing reasons than yourself for wishing to be on this side of the water. You exchanged dress, luggage, and names with him, and he passed to England instead of you as Henry Scaddon. Almost immediately afterwards you escaped from your imprisonment, after feigning an illness which prevented your exchange of names from being discovered; and it was reported that you — that is, you under the name of your fellow-prisoner — were drowned in an open boat, trying to reach a Neapolitan vessel bound for Malta. Nevertheless I have to congratulate you on the falsehood of that report, and on the certainty that you are now, after the lapse of more than twenty years, seated here in perfect safety."

Jermyn paused so long that he was evidently awaiting some answer. At last Christian replied, in a dogged tone, —

"Well, sir, I've heard much longer stories than that told quite as solemnly, when there was not a word of truth in them. Suppose I deny the very peg you hang your statement on. Suppose I say I am not Henry Scaddon."

"A — in that case — a," said Jermyn, with wooden indifference, "you would lose the advantage which — a — may attach to your possession of Henry Scaddon's knowledge."

And at the same time, if it were in the least — a — inconvenient to you that you should be recognized as Henry Scaddon, your denial would not prevent me from holding the knowledge and evidence which I possess on that point; it would only prevent us from pursuing the present conversation."

"Well, sir, suppose we admit, for the sake of the conversation, that your account of the matter is the true one: what advantage have you to offer the man named Henry Scaddon?"

"The advantage — a — is problematical; but it may be considerable. It might, in fact, release you from the necessity of acting as courier, or — a — valet, or whatever other office you may occupy which prevents you from being your own master. On the other hand, my acquaintance with your secret is not necessarily a disadvantage to you. To put the matter in a nutshell, I am not inclined — a — gratuitously — to do you any harm, and I may be able to do you a considerable service."

"Which you want me to earn somehow?" said Christian. "You offer me a turn in a lottery?"

"Precisely. The matter in question is of no earthly interest to you, except — a — as it may yield you a prize. We lawyers have to do with complicated questions, and — a — legal subtleties, which are never — a — fully known even to the parties immediately interested, still less to the witnesses. Shall we agree, then, that you continue to retain two-thirds of the name which you gained by exchange, and that you oblige me by answering certain questions as to the experience of Henry Scaddon?"

"Very good. Go on."

"What articles of property, once belonging to your fellow-prisoner, Maurice Christian Bycliffe, do you still retain?"

"This ring," said Christian, twirling round the fine seal-ring on his finger, "his watch, and the little matters that hung with it, and a case of papers. I got rid of a gold snuff-box once when I was hard-up. The clothes are all gone, of course. We exchanged everything; it was all done in a hurry. Bycliffe thought we should meet again in England before long, and he was mad to get there. But that was impossible — I mean that we should meet soon after. I don't know what's become of him, else I would give him up his papers and the watch, and so on — though, you know, it was I who did *him* the service, and he felt that."

"You were at Vesoul together before being moved to Verdun?"

"Yes."

"What else do you know about Bycliffe?"

"Oh, nothing very particular," said Christian, pausing, and rapping his boot with his cane. "He'd been in the Hanoverian army—a high-spirited fellow, took nothing easily; not over-strong in health. He made a fool of himself with marrying at Vesoul; and there was the devil to pay with the girl's relations; and then, when the prisoners were ordered off, they had to part. Whether they ever got together again I don't know."

"Was the marriage all right then?"

"Oh, all on the square—civil marriage, church—everything. Bycliffe was a fool—a good-natured, proud, headstrong fellow."

"How long did the marriage take place before you left Vesoul?"

"About three months. I was a witness to the marriage."

"And you know no more about the wife?"

"Not afterwards. I knew her very well before—pretty Annette—Annette Ledru was her name. She was of a good family, and they had made up a fine match for her. But she was one of your meek little diablesses, who have a will of their own once in their lives—the will to choose their own master."

"Bycliffe was not open to you about his other affairs?"

"Oh no—a fellow you wouldn't dare ask a question of. People told him everything, but he told nothing in return. If Madame Annette ever found him again, she found her lord and master with a vengeance; but she was a regular lapdog. However, her family shut her up—made a prisoner of her—to prevent her running away."

"Ah—good. Much of what you have been so obliging as to say is irrelevant to any possible purpose of mine, which, in fact, has to do only with a mouldy law-case that might be aired some day. You will doubtless, on your own account, maintain perfect silence on what has passed between us, and with that condition duly preserved—a—it is possible that—a—the lottery you have put into—as you observe—may turn up a prize."

"This, then, is all the business you have with me?" said Christian, rising.

"All. You will, of course, preserve carefully all the papers and other articles which have so many—a—recollections—a—attached to them?"

"Oh yes. If there's any chance of Bycliffe turning up again, I shall be sorry to have parted with the snuff-box; but I was hard-up at Naples. In fact, as you see, I was obliged at last to turn courier."

"An exceedingly agreeable life for a man of some — a — accomplishments and — a — no income," said Jermyn, rising, and reaching a candle, which he placed against his desk.

Christian knew this was a sign that he was expected to go, but he lingered standing, with one hand on the back of his chair. At last he said rather sulkily, —

"I think you're too clever, Mr. Jermyn, not to perceive that I'm not a man to be made a fool of."

"Well — a — it may perhaps be a still better guaranty for you," said Jermyn, smiling, "that I see no use in attempting that — a — metamorphosis."

"The old gentleman, who ought never to have felt himself injured, is dead now, and I'm not afraid of creditors after more than twenty years."

"Certainly not; — a — there may indeed be claims which can't assert themselves — a — legally, which yet are molesting to a man of some reputation. But you may perhaps be happily free from such fears."

Jermyn drew round his chair towards the bureau, and Christian, too acute to persevere uselessly, said "Good-day," and left the room.

After leaning back in his chair to reflect a few minutes, Jermyn wrote the following letter: —

DEAR JOHNSON, — I learn from your letter, received this morning, that you intend returning to town on Saturday.

While you are there, be so good as to see Medwin, who used to be with Batt & Cowley, and ascertain from him indirectly, and in the course of conversation on other topics, whether in that old business in 1810–11, Scaddon *alias* Bycliffe, or Bycliffe *alias* Scaddon, before his imprisonment, gave Batt & Cowley any reason to believe that he was married and expected to have a child. The question, as you know, is of no practical importance; but I wish to draw up an abstract of the Bycliffe case, and the exact position in which it stood before the suit was closed by the death of the plaintiff, in order that, if Mr. Harold Transome desires it, he may see how the failure of the last claim has secured the Durfey-Transome title, and whether there is a hair's-breadth of chance that another claim should be set up.

Of course there is not a shadow of such a chance. For even if Batt & Cowley were to suppose that they had alighted on a surviving representative of the Bycliffes, it would not enter into their heads to set up a new claim, since they brought evidence that the last life which suspended the Bycliffe remainder was extinct before the case was closed, a good twenty years ago.

Still, I want to show the present heir of the Durfey-Transomes the exact condition of the family title to the estates. So get me an answer from Medwin on the above-mentioned point. I shall meet you at Dufield next week. We must get Transome returned. Never mind his having been a little rough the other day, but go on doing what you know is necessary for his interest. His interest is mine, which I need not say is John Johnson's.

Yours faithfully,

MATTHEW JERMYN.

When the attorney had sealed this letter and leaned back in his chair again, he was inwardly saying, —

"Now, Mr. Harold, I shall shut up this affair in a private drawer till you choose to take any extreme measures which will force me to bring it out. I have the matter entirely in my own power. No one but old Lyon knows about the girl's birth. No one but Scaddon can clinch the evidence about Bycliffe, and I've got Scaddon under my thumb. No soul except myself and Johnson, who is a limb of myself, knows that there is one half-dead life which may presently leave the girl a new claim to the Bycliffe heirship. I shall learn through Methurst whether Batt & Cowley knew, through Bycliffe, of this woman having come to England. I shall hold all the threads between my thumb and finger. I can use the evidence or I can nullify it.

"And so, if Mr. Harold pushes me to extremity, and threatens me with Chancery and ruin, I have an opposing threat, which will either save me or turn into a punishment for him."

He rose, put out his candles, and stood with his back to the fire, looking out on the dim lawn, with its black twilight fringe of shrubs, still meditating. Quick thought was gleaming over five and thirty years filled with devices more or less clever, more or less desirable to be avowed. Those which might be avowed with impunity were not always to be distinguished as innocent by comparison with those which it was advisable to conceal. In a profession where much that is noxious may be done without disgrace, is a conscience likely to be without balm when circumstances have urged a man to overstep the line where his good technical information makes him aware that (with discovery) disgrace is likely to begin?

With regard to the Transome affairs, the family had been in pressing need of money, and it had lain with him to get it for them: was it to be expected that he would not consider his own advantage where he had rendered services such as are never fully paid? If it came to a question of right and wrong

instead of law, the least justifiable things he had ever done had been done on behalf of the Transomes. It had been a deucedly unpleasant thing for him to get Bycliffe arrested and thrown into prison as Henry Scaddon — perhaps hastening the man's death in that way. But if it had not been done by dint of his (Jermyn's) exertions and tact, he would like to know where the Durfey-Transomes might have been by this time. As for right or wrong, if the truth were known, the very possession of the estate by the Durfey-Transomes was owing to law-tricks that took place nearly a century ago, when the original old Durfey got his base fee.

But inward argument of this sort now, as always, was merged in anger, in exasperation, that Harold, precisely Harold Transome, should have turned out to be the probable instrument of a visitation which would be bad luck, not justice; for is there any justice where ninety-nine out of a hundred escape? He felt himself beginning to hate Harold as he had never —

Just then Jermyn's third daughter, a tall slim girl, wrapped in a white woollen shawl, which she had hung over her blanket-wise, skipped across the lawn towards the greenhouse to get a flower. Jermyn was startled, and did not identify the figure, or rather he identified it falsely with another tall white-wrapped figure which had sometimes set his heart beating quickly more than thirty years before. For a moment he was fully back in those distant years when he and another bright-eyed person had seen no reason why they should not indulge their passion and their vanity, and determine for themselves how their lives should be made delightful in spite of unalterable external conditions. The reasons had been unfolding themselves gradually ever since through all the years which had converted the handsome, soft-eyed, slim young Jermyn (with a touch of sentiment) into a portly lawyer of sixty, for whom life had resolved itself into the means of keeping up his head among his professional brethren and maintaining an establishment — into a gray-haired husband and father, whose third affectionate and expensive daughter now rapped at the window and called to him, "Papa, papa, get ready for dinner; don't you remember that the Lukyns are coming?"

CHAPTER XXII.

Her gentle looks shot arrows, piercing him
As gods are pierced, with poison of sweet pity.

THE evening of the market-day had passed, and Felix had not looked in at Malthouse Yard to talk over the public events with Mr. Lyon. When Esther was dressing the next morning, she had reached a point of irritated anxiety to see Felix, at which she found herself devising little schemes for attaining that end in some way that would be so elaborate as to seem perfectly natural. Her watch had a long-standing ailment of losing; possibly it wanted cleaning; Felix would tell her if it merely wanted regulating, whereas Mr. Prowd might detain it unnecessarily, and cause her useless inconvenience. Or could she not get a valuable hint from Mrs. Holt about the home-made bread, which was something as "sad" as Lyddy herself? Or, if she came home that way at twelve o'clock, Felix might be going out, she might meet him and not be obliged to call. Or—but it would be very much beneath her to take any steps of this sort. Her watch had been losing for the last two months—why should it not go on losing a little longer? She could think of no devices that were not so transparent as to be undignified. All the more undignified because Felix chose to live in a way that would prevent any one from classing him according to his education and mental refinement—"which certainly are very high," said Esther inwardly, coloring, as if in answer to some contrary allegation, "else I should not think his opinion of any consequence." But she came to the conclusion that she could not possibly call at Mrs. Holt's.

It followed that up to a few minutes past twelve, when she reached the turning towards Mrs. Holt's, she believed that she should go home the other way; but at the last moment there is always a reason not existing before—namely, the impossibility of further vacillation. Esther turned the corner without any visible pause, and in another minute was knocking at Mrs. Holt's door, not without an inward flutter, which she was bent on disguising.

"It's never you, Miss Lyon! who'd have thought of seeing

you at this time? Is the minister ill? I thought he looked creechy. If you want help, I'll put my bonnet on."

"Don't keep Miss Lyon at the door, mother; ask her to come in," said the ringing voice of Felix, surmounting various small shufflings and babbling voices within.

"It's my wish for her to come in, I'm sure," said Mrs. Holt, making way; "but what is there for her to come in to? a floor worse than any public. But step in, pray, if you're so inclined. When I've been forced to take my bit of carpet up, and have benches, I don't see why I need mind nothing no more."

"I only came to ask Mr. Holt if he would look at my watch for me," said Esther, entering, and blushing a general rose-color.

"He'll do that fast enough," said Mrs. Holt, with emphasis; "that's one of the things he *will* do."

"Excuse my rising, Miss Lyon," said Felix; "I'm binding up Job's finger."

Job was a small fellow about five, with a germinal nose, large round blue eyes, and red hair that curled close to his head like the wool on the head of an infantine lamb. He had evidently been crying, and the corners of his mouth were still dolorous. Felix held him on his knee as he bound and tied up very cleverly a tiny forefinger. There was a table in front of Felix and against the window, covered with his watchmaking implements and some open books. Two benches stood at right angles on the sanded floor, and six or seven boys of various ages up to twelve were getting their caps and preparing to go home. They huddled themselves together and stood still when Esther entered. Felix could not look up till he had finished his surgery, but he went on speaking.

"This is a hero, Miss Lyon. This is Job Tudge, a bold Briton whose finger hurts him, but who doesn't mean to cry. Good-morning, boys. Don't lose your time. Get out into the air."

Esther seated herself on the end of the bench near Felix, much relieved that Job was the immediate object of attention; and the other boys rushed out behind her with a brief chant of "Good-morning!"

"Did you ever see," said Mrs. Holt, standing to look on, "how wonderful Felix is at that small work with his large fingers? And that's because he learnt doctoring. It isn't for want of cleverness he looks like a poor man, Miss Lyon. I've left off speaking, else I should say it's a sin and a shame."

"Mother," said Felix, who often amused himself and kept good-humored by giving his mother answers that were unintelligible to her, "you have an astonishing readiness in the Ciceronian antiphrasis, considering you have never studied oratory. There, Job — thou patient man — sit still if thou wilt; and now we can look at Miss Lyon."

Esther had taken off her watch and was holding it in her hand. But he looked at her face, or rather at her eyes, as he said, "You want me to doctor your watch?"

Esther's expression was appealing and timid, as it had never been before in Felix's presence; but when she saw the perfect calmness, which to her seemed coldness, of his clear gray eyes, as if he saw no reason for attaching any emphasis to this first meeting, a pang swift as an electric shock darted through her. She had been very foolish to think so much of it. It seemed to her as if her inferiority to Felix made a great gulf between them. She could not at once rally her pride and self-command, but let her glance fall on her watch, and said, rather tremulously, "It loses. It is very troublesome. It has been losing a long while."

Felix took the watch from her hand; then, looking round and seeing that his mother was gone out of the room, he said, very gently, —

"You look distressed, Miss Lyon. I hope there's no trouble at home" (Felix was thinking of the minister's agitation on the previous Sunday). "But I ought perhaps to beg your pardon for saying so much."

Poor Esther was quite helpless. The mortification which had come like a bruise to all the sensibilities that had been in keen activity, insisted on some relief. Her eyes filled instantly, and a great tear rolled down while she said in a loud sort of whisper, as involuntary as her tears, —

"I wanted to tell you that I was not offended — that I am not ungenerous — I thought you might think — but you have not thought of it."

Was there ever more awkward speaking? — or any behavior less like that of the graceful, self-possessed Miss Lyon, whose phrases were usually so well-turned, and whose repartees were so ready?

For a moment there was silence. Esther had her two little delicately-gloved hands clasped on the table. The next moment she felt one hand of Felix covering them both and pressing them firmly; but he did not speak. The tears were both on her cheeks now, and she could look up at him. His

eyes had an expression of sadness in them, quite new to her. Suddenly little Job, who had his mental exercises on the occasion, called out, impatiently, —

"She's tut her finger!"

Felix and Esther laughed, and drew their hands away; and as Esther took her handkerchief to wipe the tears from her cheeks, she said, —

"You see, Job, I am a naughty coward. I can't help crying when I've hurt myself."

"Zoo soodn't kuy," said Job, energetically, being much impressed with a moral doctrine which had come to him after a sufficient transgression of it.

"Job is like me," said Felix, "fonder of preaching than of practice. But let us look at this same watch," he went on, opening and examining it. "These little Geneva toys are cleverly constructed to go always a little wrong. But if you wind them up and set them regularly every night, you may know at least that it's not noon when the hand points there."

Felix chatted, that Esther might recover herself; but now Mrs. Holt came back and apologized.

"You'll excuse my going away, I know, Miss Lyon. But there were the dumplings to see to, and what little I've got left on my hands now, I like to do well. Not but what I've more cleaning to do than ever I had in my life before, as you may tell soon enough if you look at this floor. But when you've been used to doing things, and they've been taken away from you, it's as if your hands had been cut off, and you felt the fingers as are of no use to you."

"That's a great image, mother," said Felix, as he snapped the watch together, and handed it to Esther: "I never heard you use such an image before."

"Yes, I know you've always some fault to find with what your mother says. But if ever there was a woman could talk with the open Bible before her, and not be afraid, it's me. I never did tell stories, and I never will — though I know it's done, Miss Lyon, and by church-members too, when they have candles to sell, as I could bring you the proof. But I never was one of 'em, let Felix say what he will about the printing on the tickets. His father believed it was gospel truth, and it's presumptuous to say it wasn't. For as for curing, how can anybody know? There's no physic'll cure without a blessing, and *with* a blessing I know I've seen a mustard plaster work when there was no more smell nor strength in the mustard than so much flour. And reason good — for the mustard had

lain in paper nobody knows how long — so I'll leave you to guess.

Mrs. Holt looked hard out of the window and gave a slight inarticulate sound of scorn.

Felix had leaned back in his chair with a resigned smile, and was pinching Job's ears.

Esther said, "I think I had better go now," not knowing what else to say, yet not wishing to go immediately, lest she should seem to be running away from Mrs. Holt. She felt keenly how much endurance there must be for Felix. And she had often been discontented with her father, and called him tiresome!

"Where does Job Tudge live?" she said, still sitting, and looking at the droll little figure, set off by a ragged jacket with a tail about two inches deep sticking out above the funniest of corduroys.

"Job has two mansions," said Felix. "He lives here chiefly; but he has another home, where his grandfather, Mr. Tudge, the stone-breaker, lives. My mother is very good to Job, Miss Lyon. She has made him a little bed in a cupboard, and she gives him sweetened porridge."

The exquisite goodness implied in these words of Felix impressed Esther the more, because in her hearing his talk had usually been pungent and denunciatory. Looking at Mrs. Holt, she saw that her eyes had lost their bleak north-easterly expression, and were shining with some mildness on little Job, who had turned round towards her, propping his head against Felix.

"Well, why shouldn't I be motherly to the child, Miss Lyon?" said Mrs. Holt, whose strong powers of argument required the file of an imagined contradiction, if there were no real one at hand. "I never was hard-hearted, and I never will be. It was Felix picked the child up and took to him, you may be sure, for there's nobody else master where he is; but I wasn't going to beat the orphan child and abuse him because of that, and him as straight as an arrow when he's stripped, and me so fond of children, and only had one of my own to live. I'd three babies, Miss Lyon, but the blessed Lord only spared Felix, and him the masterfullest and the brownest of 'em all. But I did my duty by him, and I said, he'll have more schooling than his father, and he'll grow up a doctor, and marry a woman with money to furnish — as I was myself, spoons and everything — and I shall have the grandchildren to look up to me, and be drove out in the gig

sometimes, like old Mrs. Lukyn. And you see what it's all come to, Miss Lyon: here's Felix made a common man of himself, and says he'll never be married — which is the most unreasonable thing, and him never easy but when he's got the child on his lap, or when —

"Stop, stop, mother," Felix burst in: "pray don't use that limping argument again — that a man should marry because he's fond of children. That's a reason for not marrying. A bachelor's children are always young: they're immortal children — always lisping, waddling, helpless, and with a chance of turning out good."

"The Lord above may know what you mean! And haven't other folk's children a chance of turning out good?"

"Oh, they grow out of it very fast. Here's Job Tudge now," said Felix, turning the little one round on his knee, and holding his head by the back — "Job's limbs will get lanky; this little fist that looks like a puff-ball and can hide nothing bigger than a gooseberry, will get large and bony, and perhaps want to clutch more than its share; these wide blue eyes that tell me more truth than Job knows, will narrow and narrow and try to hide truth that Job would be better without knowing; this little negative nose will become long and self-asserting; and this little tongue — put out thy tongue, Job" — Job, awe-struck under this ceremony, put out a little red tongue very timidly — "this tongue, hardly bigger than a rose-leaf, will get large and thick, wag out of season, do mischief, brag and cant for gain or vanity, and cut as cruelly, for all its clumsiness, as if it were a sharp-edged blade. Big Job will perhaps be naughty —" As Felix, speaking with the loud emphatic distinctness habitual to him, brought out this terribly familiar word, Job's sense of mystification became too painful: he hung his lip and began to cry.

"See there," said Mrs. Holt, "you're frightening the innocent child with such talk — and it's enough to frighten them that think themselves the safest."

"Look here, Job, my man," said Felix, setting the boy down and turning him towards Esther; "go to Miss Lyon, ask her to smile at you, and that will dry up your tears like the sunshine."

Job put his two brown fists on Esther's lap, and she stooped to kiss him. Then holding his face between her hands, she said, "Tell Mr. Holt we don't mean to be naughty, Job. He should believe in us more. But now I must really go home."

Esther rose and held out her hand to Mrs. Holt, who kept it while she said, a little to Esther's confusion, —

"I am very glad it's took your fancy to come here sometimes, Miss Lyon. I know you're thought to hold your head high, but I speak of people as I find 'em. And I'm sure anybody had need be humble that comes where there's a floor like this—for I've put by my best tea-trays, they're so out of all charicter—I must look Above for comfort now; but I don't say I'm not worthy to be called on for all that."

Felix had risen and moved towards the door that he might open it and shield Esther from more last words on his mother's part.

"Good-by, Mr. Holt."

"Will Mr. Lyon like me to sit with him an hour this evening, do you think?"

"Why not? He always likes to see you."

"Then I will come. Good-by."

"She's a very straight figure," said Mrs. Holt. "How she carries herself! But I doubt there's some truth in what our people say. If she won't look at young Muscat, it's the better for *him*. He'd need have a big fortune that marries her."

"That's true, mother," said Felix, sitting down, snatching up little Job, and finding a vent for some unspeakable feeling in the pretence of worrying him.

Esther was rather melancholy as she went home, yet happier withal than she had been for many days before. She thought, "I need not mind having shown so much anxiety about his opinion. He is too clear-sighted to mistake our mutual position; he is quite above putting a false interpretation on what I have done. Besides, he had not thought of me at all—I saw that plainly enough. Yet he was very kind. There is something greater and better in him than I had imagined. His behavior to-day—to his mother and me too—I should call it the highest gentlemanliness, only it seems in him to be something deeper. But he has chosen an intolerable life; though I suppose, if I had a mind equal to his, and if he loved me very dearly, I should choose the same life."

Esther felt that she had prefixed an impossible "if" to that result. But now she had known Felix, her conception of what a happy love must be had become like a dissolving view, in which the once-clear images were gradually melting into

new forms and new colors. The favorite Byronic heroes were beginning to look something like last night's decorations seen in the sober dawn. So fast does a little leaven spread within us — so incalculable is the effect of one personality on another. Behind all Esther's thoughts, like an unacknowledged yet constraining presence, there was the sense, that if Felix Holt were to love her, her life would be exalted into something quite new — into a sort of difficult blessedness, such as one may imagine in beings who are conscious of painfully growing into the possession of higher powers.

It was quite true that Felix had not thought the more of Esther because of that Sunday afternoon's interview which had shaken her mind to the very roots. He had avoided intruding on Mr. Lyon without special reason, because he believed the minister to be preoccupied with some private care. He had thought a great deal of Esther with a mixture of strong disapproval and strong liking, which both together made a feeling the reverse of indifference; but he was not going to let her have any influence on his life. Even if his determination had not been fixed, he would have believed that she would utterly scorn him in any other light than that of an acquaintance, and the emotion she had shown to-day did not change that belief. But he was deeply touched by this manifestation of her better qualities, and felt that there was a new tie of friendship between them. That was the brief history Felix would have given of his relation to Esther. And he was accustomed to observe himself. But very close and diligent looking at living creatures, even through the best microscope, will leave room for new and contradictory discoveries.

Felix found Mr. Lyon particularly glad to talk to him. The minister had never yet disburthened himself about his letter to Mr. Philip Debarry concerning the public conference; and as by this time he had all the heads of his discussion thoroughly in his mind, it was agreeable to recite them, as well as to express his regret that time had been lost by Mr. Debarry's absence from the Manor, which had prevented the immediate fulfilment of his pledge.

"I don't see how he can fulfil it if the Rector refuses," said Felix, thinking it well to moderate the little man's confidence.

"The Rector is of a spirit that will not incur earthly impeachment, and he cannot refuse what is necessary to his nephew's honorable discharge of an obligation," said Mr. Lyon.

"My young friend, it is a case wherein the prearranged conditions tend by such a beautiful fitness to the issue I have sought, that I should have forever held myself a traitor to my charge had I neglected the indication."

CHAPTER XXIII.

"I will not excuse you ; you shall not be excused ; excuses shall not be admitted ; there's no excuse shall serve ; you shall not be excused." — *Henry IV.*

WHEN Philip Debarry had come home that morning and read the letters which had not been forwarded to him, he laughed so heartily at Mr. Lyon's that he congratulated himself on being in his private room. Otherwise his laughter would have awakened the curiosity of Sir Maximus, and Philip did not wish to tell any one the contents of the letter until he had shown them to his uncle. He determined to ride over to the Rectory to lunch ; for as Lady Mary was away, he and his uncle might be *tête-à-tête*.

The Rectory was on the other side of the river, close to the church of which it was the fitting companion : a fine old brick-and-stone house, with a great bow-window opening from the library onto the deep-turfed lawn, one fat dog sleeping on the door-stone, another fat dog waddling on the gravel, the autumn leaves duly swept away, the lingering chrysanthemums cherished, tall trees stooping or soaring in the most picturesque variety, and a Virginian creeper turning a little rustic hut into a scarlet pavilion. It was one of those rectories which are among the bulwarks of our venerable institutions — which arrest disintegrating doubt, serve as a double embankment against Popery and Dissent, and rally feminine instinct and affection to re-enforce the decisions of masculine thought.

"What makes you look so merry, Phil ?" said the Rector, as his nephew entered the pleasant library.

"Something that concerns you," said Philip, taking out the letter. "A clerical challenge. Here's an opportunity for you to emulate the divines of the sixteenth century and have a theological duel. Read this letter."

"What answer have you sent the crazy little fellow ?" said the Rector, keeping the letter in his hand and running over it again and again, with brow knit, but eyes gleaming without any malignity.

"Oh, I sent no answer. I awaited yours."

"Mine!" said the Rector, throwing down the letter on the table. "You don't suppose I'm going to hold a public debate with a schismatic of that sort? I should have an infidel shoemaker next expecting me to answer blasphemies delivered in bad grammar."

"But you see how he puts it," said Philip. With all his gravity of nature he could not resist a slightly mischievous prompting, though he had a serious feeling that he should not like to be regarded as failing to fulfil his pledge. "I think if you refuse, I shall be obliged to offer myself."

"Nonsense! Tell him he is himself acting a dishonorable part in interpreting your words as a pledge to do any preposterous thing that suits his fancy. Suppose he had asked you to give him land to build a chapel on; doubtless that would have given him a 'lively satisfaction.' A man who puts a non-natural strained sense on a promise, is no better than a robber."

"But he has not asked for land. I dare say he thinks you won't object to his proposal. I confess there's a simplicity and quaintness about the letter that rather pleases me."

"Let me tell you, Phil, he's a crazy little firefly, that does a great deal of harm in my parish. He inflames the Dissenters' minds on politics. There's no end to the mischief done by these busy prating men. They make the ignorant multitude the judges of the largest questions, both political and religious, till we shall soon have no institution left that is not on a level with the comprehension of a huckster or a drayman. There can be nothing more retrograde — losing all the results of civilization, all the lessons of Providence — letting the windlass run down after men have been turning at it painfully for generations. If the instructed are not to judge for the uninstructed, why, let us set Dick Stubbs to make our almanacs, and have a President of the Royal Society elected by universal suffrage."

The Rector had risen, placed himself with his back to the fire, and thrust his hands in his pockets, ready to insist further on this wide argument. Philip sat nursing one leg, listening respectfully, as he always did, though often listening to the sonorous echo of his own statements, which suited his uncle's needs so exactly that he did not distinguish them from his old impressions.

"True," said Philip, "but in special cases we have to do with special conditions. You know I defend the casuists."

And it may happen that, for the honor of the Church in Treby and a little also for my honor, circumstances may demand a concession even to some notions of a Dissenting preacher."

"Not at all. I should be making a figure which my brother clergy might well take as an affront to themselves. The character of the Establishment has suffered enough already through the Evangelicals, with their extempore incoherence and their pipe-smoking piety. Look at Wimple, the man who is vicar of Shuttleton — without his gown and bands, anybody would take him for a grocer in mourning."

"Well, I shall cut a still worse figure, and so will you, in the Dissenting magazines and newspapers. It will go the round of the kingdom. There will be a paragraph headed, 'Tory Falsehood and Clerical Cowardice,' or else 'The Meanness of the Aristocracy and the Incompetence of the Beneficed Clergy.'"

"There would be a worse paragraph if I were to consent to the debate. Of course it would be said that I was beaten hollow, and that now the question had been cleared up at Treby Magna, the Church had not a sound leg to stand on. Besides," the Rector went on, frowning and smiling, "it's all very well for you to talk, Phil, but this debating is not so easy when a man's close upon sixty. What one writes or says must be something good and scholarly; and after all had been done, this little Lyon would buzz about one like a wasp, and cross-question and rejoin. Let me tell you, a plain truth may be so worried and mauled by fallacies as to get the worst of it. There's no such thing as tiring a talking machine like Lyon."

"Then you absolutely refuse?"

"Yes, I do."

"You remember that when I wrote my letter of thanks to Lyon you approved my offer to serve him if possible."

"Certainly I remember it. But suppose he had asked you to vote for civil marriage, or to go and hear him preach every Sunday?"

"But he has not asked that."

"Something as unreasonable though."

"Well," said Philip, taking up Mr. Lyon's letter and looking graver — looking even vexed, "it is rather an unpleasant business for me. I really felt obliged to him. I think there's a sort of worth in the man beyond his class. Whatever may be the reason of the case, I shall disappoint him instead of doing him the service I offered."

"Well, that's a misfortune; we can't help it."

"The worst of it is, I should be insulting him to say, 'I will do anything else, but not just this that you want.' He evidently feels himself in company with Luther and Zwingle and Calvin, and considers our letters part of the history of Protestantism."

"Yes, yes. I know it's rather an unpleasant thing, Phil. You are aware that I would have done anything in reason to prevent you from becoming unpopular here. I consider your character a possession to all of us."

"I think I must call on him forthwith and explain and apologize."

"No, sit still; I've thought of something," said the Rector, with a sudden revival of spirits. "I've just seen Sherlock coming in. He is to lunch with me to-day. It would do no harm for him to hold the debate—a curate and a young man—he'll gain by it; and it would release you from any awkwardness, Phil. Sherlock is not going to stay here long, you know; he'll soon have his title. I'll put the thing to him. He won't object if I wish it. It's a capital idea. It will do Sherlock good. He's a clever fellow, but he wants confidence."

Philip had not time to object before Mr. Sherlock appeared—a young divine of good birth and figure, of sallow complexion and bashful address.

"Sherlock, you have come in most opportunely," said the Rector. "A case has turned up in the parish in which you can be of eminent use. I know that is what you have desired ever since you have been with me. But I'm about so much myself that there really has not been sphere enough for you. You are a studious man, I know; I dare say you have all the necessary matter prepared—at your finger-ends, if not on paper."

Mr. Sherlock smiled with rather a trembling lip, willing to distinguish himself, but hoping that the Rector only alluded to a dialogue on Baptism by Aspersion, or some other pamphlet suited to the purposes of the Christian Knowledge Society. But as the Rector proceeded to unfold the circumstances under which his eminent service was to be rendered, he grew more and more nervous.

"You'll oblige me very much, Sherlock," the Rector ended, "by going into this thing zealously. Can you guess what time you will require? because it will rest with us to fix the day."

"I should be rejoiced to oblige you, Mr. Debarry, but I really think I am not competent to—"

"That's your modesty, Sherlock. Don't let me hear any more of that. I know Filmore of Corpus said you might be a first-rate man if your diffidence didn't do you injustice. And you can refer anything to me, you know. Come, you will set about the thing at once. But, Phil, you must tell the preacher to send a scheme of the debate—all the different heads—and he must agree to keep rigidly within the scheme. There, sit down at my desk and write the letter now; Thomas shall carry it."

Philip sat down to write, and the Rector, with his firm ringing voice, went on at his ease, giving "indications" to his agitated curate.

"But you can begin at once preparing a good, cogent, clear statement, and considering the probable points of assault. You can look into Jewel, Hall, Hooker, Whitgift, and the rest: you'll find them all here. My library wants nothing in English divinity. Sketch the lower ground taken by Usher and those men, but bring all your force to bear on marking out the true High-Church doctrine. Expose the wretched cavils of the Nonconformists, and the noisy futility that belongs to schismatics generally. I will give you a telling passage from Burke on the Dissenters, and some good quotations which I brought together in two sermons of my own on the Position of the English Church in Christendom. How long do you think it will take you to bring your thoughts together? You can throw them afterwards into the form of an essay; we'll have the thing printed; it will do you good with the Bishop."

With all Mr. Sherlock's timidity, there was fascination for him in this distinction. He reflected that he could take coffee and sit up late, and perhaps produce something rather fine. It might be a first step towards that eminence which it was no more than his duty to aspire to. Even a polemical fame like that of a Philpotts must have had a beginning. Mr. Sherlock was not insensible to the pleasure of turning sentences successfully, and it was a pleasure not always unconnected with preferment. A diffident man likes the idea of doing something remarkable, which will create belief in him without any immediate display of brilliancy. Celebrity may blush and be silent, and win a grace the more. Thus Mr. Sherlock was constrained, trembling all the while, and much wishing that his essay were already in print.

"I think I could hardly be ready under a fortnight."

"Very good. Just write that, Phil, and tell him to fix the precise day and place. And then we'll go to lunch."

The Rector was quite satisfied. He had talked himself into thinking that he should like to give Sherlock a few useful hints, look up his own earlier sermons, and benefit the Curate by his criticism, when the argument had been got into shape. He was a healthy-natured man, but that was not at all a reason why he should not have those sensibilities to the odor of authorship which belong to almost everybody who is not expected to be a writer — and especially to that form of authorship which is called suggestion, and consists in telling another man that he might do a great deal with a given subject, by bringing a sufficient amount of knowledge, reasoning, and wit to bear upon it.

Philip would have had some twinges of conscience about the Curate, if he had not guessed that the honor thrust upon him was not altogether disagreeable. The Church might perhaps have had a stronger supporter; but for himself, he had done what he was bound to do: he had done his best towards fulfilling Mr. Lyon's desire.

CHAPTER XXIV.

If he come not, the play is marred — *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

RUFUS LYON was very happy on that mild November morning appointed for the great conference in the larger room at the Free School, between himself and the Rev. Theodore Sherlock, B.A. The disappointment of not contending with the Rector in person, which had at first been bitter, had been gradually lost sight of in the positive enjoyment of an opportunity for debating on any terms. Mr. Lyon had two grand elements of pleasure on such occasions: confidence in the strength of his case, and confidence in his own power of advocacy. Not — to use his own phrase — not that he "glorified himself herein;" for speech and exposition were so easy to him, that if he argued forcibly, he believed it to be simply because the truth was forcible. He was not proud of moving easily in his native medium. A panting man thinks of himself as a clever swimmer; but a fish swims much better, and takes his performance as a matter of course.

Whether Mr. Sherlock were that panting, self-gratulating man, remained a secret. Philip Debarry, much occupied with his electioneering affairs, had only once had an opportunity

of asking his uncle how Sherlock got on, and the Rector had said, curtly, "I think he'll do. I've supplied him well with references. I advise him to read only, and decline everything else as out of order. Lyon will speak to a point, and then Sherlock will read: it will be all the more telling. It will give variety." But on this particular morning peremptory business connected with the magistracy called the Rector away.

Due notice had been given, and the feminine world of Treby Magna was much more agitated by the prospect than by that of any candidate's speech. Mrs. Pendrell at the Bank, Mrs. Tiliot, and the Church ladies generally, felt bound to hear the Curate, who was known, apparently by an intuition concerning the nature of curates, to be a very clever young man; and he would show them what learning had to say on the right side. One or two Dissenting ladies were not without emotion at the thought that, seated on the front benches, they should be brought near to old Church friends, and have a longer greeting than had taken place since the Catholic Emancipation. Mrs. Muscat, who had been a beauty, and was as nice in her millinery as any Trebian lady belonging to the Establishment, reflected that she should put on her best large embroidered collar, and that she should ask Mrs. Tiliot where it was in Duffield that she once got her bed-hangings dyed so beautifully. When Mrs. Tiliot was Mary Salt, the two ladies had been bosom friends; but Mr. Tiliot had looked higher and higher since his gin had become so famous; and in the year '29 he had, in Mr. Muscat's hearing, spoken of Dissenters as sneaks—a personality which could not be overlooked.

The debate was to begin at eleven, for the Rector would not allow the evening to be chosen, when low men and boys might want to be admitted out of mere mischief. This was one reason why the female part of the audience outnumbered the males. But some chief Trebians were there, even men whose means made them as independent of theory as Mr. Pendrell and Mr. Wace; encouraged by reflecting that they were not in a place of worship, and would not be obliged to stay longer than they chose. There was a muster of all Dissenters who could spare the morning time, and on the back benches were all the aged Churchwomen who shared the remnants of the sacrament wine, and who were humbly anxious to neglect nothing ecclesiastical or connected with "going to a better place."

At eleven the arrival of listeners seemed to have ceased. Mr. Lyon was seated on the school tribune or dais at his particular round table; another round table, with a chair, awaited the Curate, with whose superior position it was quite in keeping that he should not be first on the ground. A couple of extra chairs were placed farther back, and more than one important personage had been requested to act as chairman; but no Churchman would place himself in a position so equivocal as to dignity of aspect, and so unequivocal as to the obligation of sitting out the discussion; and the Rector had beforehand put a veto on any Dissenting chairman.

Mr. Lyon sat patiently absorbed in his thoughts, with his notes in minute handwriting lying before him, seeming to look at the audience, but not seeing them. Every one else was contented that there should be an interval in which there could be a little neighborly talk.

Esther was particularly happy, seated on a side-bench near her father's side of the tribune, with Felix close behind her, so that she could turn her head and talk to him. He had been very kind ever since that morning when she had called at his home, more disposed to listen indulgently to what she had to say, and less blind to her looks and movements. If he had never railed at her or ignored her, she would have been less sensitive to the attention he gave her; but as it was, the prospect of seeing him seemed to light up her life, and to disperse the old dulness. She looked unusually charming to-day, from the very fact that she was not vividly conscious of anything but of having a mind near her that asked her to be something better than she actually was. The consciousness of her own superiority amongst the people around her was superseded, and even a few brief weeks had given a softened expression to her eyes, a more feminine beseechingsness and self-doubt to her manners. Perhaps, however, a little new defiance was rising in place of the old contempt — defiance of the Trebian views concerning Felix Holt.

"What a very nice-looking young woman your minister's daughter is!" said Mrs. Tiliot in an undertone to Mrs. Muscat, who, as she had hoped, had found a seat next to her quondam friend — "quite the lady."

"Rather too much so, considering," said Mrs. Muscat. "She's thought proud, and that's not pretty in a girl, even if there was anything to back it up. But now she seems to be encouraging that young Holt, who scoffs at everything, as you may judge by his appearance. She has despised his betters

before now; but I leave you to judge whether a young man who has taken to low ways of getting his living can pay for fine cambric handkerchiefs and light kid gloves."

Mrs. Muscat lowered her blond eyelashes and swayed her neat head just perceptibly from side to side, with a sincere desire to be moderate in her expressions, notwithstanding any shock that facts might have given her.

"Dear, dear," said Mrs. Tiliot. "What! that is young Holt leaning forward now without a cravat? I've never seen him before to notice him, but I've heard Tiliot talking about him. They say he's a dangerous character, and goes stirring up the working men at Sproxton. And—well, to be sure, such great eyes and such a great head of hair—it is enough to frighten one. What can she see in him? Quite below her."

"Yes, and brought up a governess," said Mrs. Muscat; "you'd have thought she'd know better how to choose. But the minister has let her get the upper hand sadly too much. It's a pity in a man of God. I don't deny he's *that*."

"Well, I am sorry," said Mrs. Tiliot, "for I meant her to give my girls lessons when they came from school."

Mr. Wace and Mr. Pendrell meanwhile were standing up and looking round at the audience, nodding to their fellow-townpeople with the affability due from men in their position.

"It's time he came now," said Mr. Wace, looking at his watch and comparing it with the schoolroom clock. "This debating is a newfangled sort of thing; but the Rector would never have given in to it if there hadn't been good reasons. Nolan said he wouldn't come. He says this debating is an atheistical sort of thing; the Atheists are very fond of it. Theirs is a bad book to take a leaf out of. However, we shall hear nothing but what's good from Mr. Sherlock. He preaches a capital sermon—for such a young man."

"Well, it was our duty to support him—not to leave him alone among the Dissenters," said Mr. Pendrell. "You see, everybody hasn't felt that. Labron might have shown himself, if not Lukyn. I could have alleged business myself if I had thought proper."

"Here he comes, I think," said Mr. Wace, turning round on hearing a movement near the small door on a level with the platform. "By George! it's Mr. Debarry. Come now, this is handsome."

Mr. Wace and Mr. Pendrell clapped their hands, and the

example was followed even by most of the Dissenters. Philip was aware that he was doing a popular thing, of a kind that Treby was not used to from the elder Debarrys; but his appearance had not been long premeditated. He was driving through the town towards an engagement at some distance, but on calling at Labron's office he had found that the affair which demanded his presence had been deferred, and so had driven round to the Free School. Christian came in behind him.

Mr. Lyon was now roused from his abstraction, and, stepping from his slight elevation, begged Mr. Debarry to act as moderator or president on the occasion.

"With all my heart," said Philip. "But Mr. Sherlock has not arrived, apparently?"

"He tarries somewhat unduly," said Mr. Lyon. "Nevertheless there may be a reason of which we know not. Shall I collect the thoughts of the assembly by a brief introductory address in the interval?"

"No, no, no," said Mr. Wace, who saw a limit to his powers of endurance. "Mr. Sherlock is sure to be here in a minute or two."

"Christian," said Philip Debarry, who felt a slight misgiving, "just be so good — but stay, I'll go myself. Excuse me, gentlemen: I'll drive round to Mr. Sherlock's lodgings. He may be under a little mistake as to the time. Studious men are sometimes rather absent. You needn't come with me, Christian."

As Mr. Debarry went out, Rufus Lyon stepped on to the tribune again in rather an uneasy state of mind. A few ideas had occurred to him, eminently fitted to engage the audience profitably, and so to wrest some edification out of an unforeseen delay. But his native delicacy made him feel that in this assembly the Church people might fairly decline any "deliverance" on his part which exceeded the programme, and Mr. Wace's negative had been energetic. But the little man suffered from imprisoned ideas, and was as restless as a racer held in. He could not sit down again, but walked backwards and forwards, stroking his chin, emitting his low guttural interjection under the pressure of clauses and sentences which he longed to utter aloud, as he would have done in his own study. There was a low buzz in the room which helped to deepen the minister's sense that the thoughts within him were as divine messengers unheeded or rejected by a trivial generation. Many of the audience were standing; all, except

the old Church-women on the back seats, and a few devout Dissenters who kept their eyes shut and gave their bodies a gentle oscillating motion, were interested in chat.

"Your father is uneasy," said Felix to Esther.

"Yes; and now, I think, he is feeling for his spectacles. I hope he has not left them at home: he will not be able to see anything two yards before him without them;—and it makes him so unconscious of what people expect or want."

"I'll go and ask him whether he has them," said Felix, striding over the form in front of him, and approaching Mr. Lyon, whose face showed a gleam of pleasure at this relief from his abstracted isolation.

"Miss Lyon is afraid that you are at a loss for your spectacles, sir," said Felix.

"My dear young friend," said Mr. Lyon, laying his hand on Felix Holb's fore-arm, which was about on a level with the minister's shoulder, "it is a very glorious truth, albeit made somewhat painful to me by the circumstances of the present moment, that as a counterpoise to the brevity of our mortal life (wherein, as I apprehend, our powers are being trained not only for the transmission of an improved heritage, as I have heard you insist, but also for our own entrance into a higher initiation in the Divine scheme)—it is, I say, a very glorious truth, that even in what are called the waste minutes of our time, like those of expectation, the soul may soar and range, as in some of our dreams which are brief as a broken rainbow in duration, yet seem to comprise a long history of terror or of joy. And again, each moment may be a beginning of a new spiritual energy; and our pulse would doubtless be a coarse and clumsy notation of the passage from that which was not to that which is, even in the finer processes of the material world—and how much more—"

Esther was watching her father and Felix, and though she was not within hearing of what was being said, she guessed the actual state of the case—that the inquiry about the spectacles had been unheeded, and that her father was losing himself and embarrassing Felix in the intricacies of a dissertation. There was not the stillness around her that would have made a movement on her part seem conspicuous, and she was impelled by her anxiety to step on the tribune and walk up to her father, who paused, a little startled.

"Pray see whether you have forgotten your spectacles, father. If so, I will go home at once and look for them."

Mr. Lyon was automatically obedient to Esther, and he began immediately to feel in his pockets.

"How is it that Miss Jermyn is so friendly with the Dissenting parson?" said Christian to Quorlen, the Tory printer, who was an intimate of his. "Those grand Jermyns are not Dissenters surely?"

"What Miss Jermyn?"

"Why — don't you see? — that fine girl who is talking to him."

"Miss Jermyn! Why, that's the little parson's daughter."

"His daughter!" Christian gave a low brief whistle, which seemed a natural expression of surprise that "the rusty old ranter" should have a daughter of such distinguished appearance.

Meanwhile the search for the spectacles had proved vain. "'Tis a grievous fault in me, my dear," said the little man, humbly; "I become thereby sadly burthensome to you."

"I will go at once," said Esther, refusing to let Felix go instead of her. But she had scarcely stepped off the tribune when Mr. Debarry re-entered, and there was a commotion which made her wait. After a low-toned conversation with Mr. Pendrell and Mr. Wace, Philip Debarry stepped on to the tribune with his hat in his hand, and said, with an air of much concern and annoyance, —

"I am sorry to have to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, that — doubtless owing to some accidental cause which I trust will soon be explained as nothing serious — Mr. Sherlock is absent from his residence, and is not to be found. He went out early, his landlady informs me, to refresh himself by a walk on this agreeable morning, as is his habit, she tells me, when he has been kept up late by study; and he has not returned. Do not let us be too anxious. I shall cause inquiry to be made in the direction of his walk. It is easy to imagine many accidents, not of a grave character, by which he might nevertheless be absolutely detained against his will. Under these circumstances, Mr. Lyon," continued Philip, turning to the minister, "I presume that the debate must be adjourned."

"The debate, doubtless," began Mr. Lyon; but his further speech was drowned by a general rising of the Church people from their seats, many of them feeling that, even if the cause were lamentable, the adjournment was not altogether disagreeable.

"Good gracious me!" said Mrs. Tiliot, as she took her husband's arm, "I hope the poor young man hasn't fallen into the river or broken his leg."

But some of the more acrid Dissenters, whose temper was not controlled by the habits of retail business, had begun to hiss, implying that in their interpretation the Curate's absence had not depended on any injury to life or limb.

"He's turned tail, sure enough," said Mr. Muscat to the neighbor behind him, lifting his eyebrows and shoulders, and laughing in a way that showed that, deacon as he was, he looked at the affair in an entirely secular light.

But Mrs. Muscat thought it would be nothing but right to have all the waters dragged, agreeing in this with the majority of the Church ladies.

"I regret sincerely, Mr. Lyon," said Philip Debarry, addressing the minister with politeness, "that I must say good-morning to you, with the sense that I have not been able at present to contribute to your satisfaction as I had wished."

"Speak not of it in the way of apology, sir," said Mr. Lyon, in a tone of depression. "I doubt not that you yourself have acted in good faith. Nor will I open any door of egress to constructions such as anger often deems ingenious, but which the disclosure of the simple truth may expose as erroneous and uncharitable fabrications. I wish you good-morning, sir."

When the room was cleared of the Church people, Mr. Lyon wished to soothe his own spirit and that of his flock by a few reflections introductory to a parting prayer. But there was a general resistance to this effort. The men mustered round the minister, and declared their opinion that the whole thing was disgraceful to the Church. Some said the Curate's absence had been contrived from the first. Others more than hinted that it had been a folly in Mr. Lyon to set on foot any procedure in common with Tories and clergymen, who, if they ever aped civility to Dissenters, would never do anything but laugh at them in their sleeves. Brother Kemp urged in his heavy bass that Mr. Lyon should lose no time in sending an account of the affair to the *Patriot*; and Brother Hawkins, in his high tenor, observed that it was an occasion on which some stinging things might be said with all the extra effect of an *apropos*.

The position of receiving a many-voiced lecture from the members of his church was familiar to Mr. Lyon; but now he felt weary, frustrated, and doubtful of his own temper. Felix, who stood by and saw that this man of sensitive fibre was suffering from talkers whose noisy superficiality cost them nothing, got exasperated. "It seems to me, sirs," he burst in,

with his predominant voice, "that Mr. Lyon has hitherto had the hard part of the business, while you of his congregation have had the easy one. Punish the Church clergy, if you like — they can take care of themselves. But don't punish your own minister. It's no business of mine, perhaps, except so far as fair play is everybody's business; but it seems to me the time to ask Mr. Lyon to take a little rest, instead of setting on him like so many wasps."

By this speech Felix raised a displeasure which fell on the minister as well as on himself; but he gained his immediate end. The talkers dropped off after a slight show of persistence, and Mr. Lyon quitted the field of no combat with a small group of his less imperious friends, to whom he confided his intention of committing his argument fully to paper, and forwarding it to a discriminating editor.

"But regarding personalities," he added, "I have not the same clear showing. For, say that this young man was pusillanimous — I were but ill provided with arguments if I took my stand even for a moment on so poor an irrelevancy as that because one curate is ill furnished therefore Episcopacy is false. If I held up any one to just obloquy, it would be the well-designated Incumbent of this parish, who, calling himself one of the Church militant, sends a young and weak-kneed substitute to take his place in the fight."

Mr. Philip Debarry did not neglect to make industrious inquiry concerning the accidents which had detained the Rev. Theodore Sherlock on his morning walk. That well-intentioned young divine was seen no more in Treby Magna. But the river was not dragged, for by the evening coach the Rector received an explanatory letter. The Rev. Theodore's agitation had increased so much during his walk, that the passing coach had been a means of deliverance not to be resisted; and, literally at the eleventh hour, he had hailed and mounted the cheerful Tally-ho! and carried away his portion of the debate in his pocket.

But the Rector had subsequently the satisfaction of receiving Mr. Sherlock's painstaking production in print, with a dedication to the Rev. Augustus Debarry, a motto from St. Chrysostom, and other additions, the fruit of ripening leisure. He was "sorry for poor Sherlock, who wanted confidence;" but he was convinced that for his own part he had taken the course which under the circumstances was the least compromising to the Church. Sir Maximus, however, observed to his son and brother that he had been right and they had been

wrong as to the danger of vague, enormous expressions of gratitude to a Dissenting preacher, and on any differences of opinion seldom failed to remind them of that precedent.

CHAPTER XXV.

Your fellow-man? — Divide the epithet:
Say rather, you're the fellow, he the man.

WHEN Christian quitted the Free School with the discovery that the young lady whose appearance had first startled him with an indefinable impression in the market-place was the daughter of the old Dissenting preacher who had shown so much agitated curiosity about his name, he felt very much like an uninitiated chess-player, who sees that the pieces are in a peculiar position on the board, and might open the way for him to give checkmate, if he only knew how. Ever since his interview with Jermyn, his mind had been occupied with the charade it offered to his ingenuity. What was the real meaning of the lawyer's interest in him, and in his relations with Maurice Christian Bycliffe? Here was a secret; and secrets were often a source of profit, of that agreeable kind which involved little labor. Jermyn had hinted at profit which might possibly come through him; but Christian said inwardly, with well-satisfied self-esteem, that he was not so pitiable a nincompoop as to trust Jermyn. On the contrary, the only problem before him was to find out by what combination of independent knowledge he could outwit Jermyn, elude any purchase the attorney had on him through his past history, and get a handsome bonus, by which a somewhat shattered man of pleasure might live well without a master. Christian, having early exhausted the more impulsive delights of life, had become a sober calculator; and he had made up his mind that, for a man who had long ago run through his own money, servitude in a great family was the best kind of retirement after that of a pensioner; but if a better chance offered, a person of talent must not let it slip through his fingers. He held various ends of threads, but there was danger in pulling at them too impatiently. He had not forgotten the surprise which had made him drop the punch-ladle, when Mr. Crowder, talking in the steward's room, had said that a scamp named Henry Scaddon had been concerned in a

lawsuit about the Transome estate. Again, Jermyn was the family lawyer of the Transomes; he knew about the exchange of names between Scaddon and Bycliffe; he clearly wanted to know as much as he could about Bycliffe's history. The conclusion was not remote that Bycliffe had had some claim on the Transome property, and that a difficulty had arisen from his being confounded with Henry Scaddon. But hitherto the other incident which had been apparently connected with the interchange of names — Mr. Lyon's demand that he should write down the name Maurice Christian, accompanied with the question whether that were his whole name — had had no visible link with the inferences arrived at through Crowder and Jermyn.

The discovery made this morning at the Free School that Esther was the daughter of the Dissenting preacher at last suggested a possible link. Until then, Christian had not known why Esther's face had impressed him so peculiarly; but the minister's chief association for him was with Bycliffe, and that association served as a flash to show him that Esther's features and expression, and still more her bearing, now she stood and walked, revived Bycliffe's image. Daughter? There were various ways of being a daughter. Suppose this were a case of adoption: suppose Bycliffe were known to be dead, or thought to be dead. "Begad, if the old parson had fancied the original father was come to life again, it was enough to frighten him a little. Slow and steady," Christian said to himself; "I'll get some talk with the old man again. He's safe enough: one can handle him without cutting one's self. I'll tell him I knew Bycliffe, and was his fellow-prisoner. I'll worm out the truth about this daughter. Could pretty Annette have married again, and married this little scare-crow? There's no knowing what a woman will not do."

Christian could see no distinct result for himself from his industry: but if there were to be any such result, it must be reached by following out every clew; and to the non-legal mind there are dim possibilities in law and heirship which prevent any issue from seeming too miraculous.

The consequence of these meditations was, that Christian hung about Treby more than usual in his leisure time, and that on the first opportunity he accosted Mr. Lyon in the street with suitable civility, stating that since the occasion which had brought them together some weeks before he had often wished to renew their conversation, and, with Mr. Lyon's

permission, would now ask to do so. After being assured, as he had been by Jermyn, that this courier, who had happened by some accident to possess the memorable locket and pocket-book, was certainly not Annette's husband, and was ignorant whether Maurice Christian Bycliffe were living or dead, the minister's mind had become easy again; his habitual lack of interest in personal details rendering him gradually oblivious of Jermyn's precautionary statement that he was pursuing inquiries, and that if anything of interest turned up, Mr. Lyon should be made acquainted with it. Hence, when Christian addressed him, the minister, taken by surprise and shaken by the recollections of former anxieties, said, helplessly, —

"If it is business, sir, you would perhaps do better to address yourself to Mr. Jermyn."

He could not have said anything that was a more valuable hint to Christian. He inferred that the minister had made a confidant of Jermyn, and it was needful to be wary.

"On the contrary, sir," he answered, "it may be of the utmost importance to you that what passes between us should not be known to Mr. Jermyn."

Mr. Lyon was perplexed, and felt at once that he was no more in clear daylight concerning Jermyn than concerning Christian. He dared not neglect the possible duty of hearing what this man had to say, and he invited him to proceed to Malthouse Yard, where they could converse in private.

Once in Mr. Lyon's study, Christian opened the dialogue by saying that since he was in this room before it had occurred to him that the anxiety he had observed in Mr. Lyon might be owing to some acquaintance with Maurice Christian Bycliffe — a fellow-prisoner in France, whom he, Christian, had assisted in getting freed from his imprisonment, and who, in fact, had been the owner of the trifles which Mr. Lyon had recently had in his possession and had restored. Christian hastened to say that he knew nothing of Bycliffe's history since they had parted in France, but that he knew of his marriage with Annette Ledru, and had been acquainted with Annette herself. He would be very glad to know what became of Bycliffe, if he could, for he liked him uncommonly.

Here Christian paused; but Mr. Lyon only sat changing color and trembling. This man's bearing and tone of mind were made repulsive to him by being brought in contact with keenly-felt memories, and he could not readily summon the courage to give answers or ask questions.

"May I ask if you knew my friend Bycliffe?" said Christian, trying a more direct method.

"No, sir; I never saw him."

"Ah! well—you have seen a very striking likeness of him. It's wonderful—unaccountable; but when I saw Miss Lyon at the Free School the other day, I could have sworn she was Bycliffe's daughter."

"Sir!" said Mr. Lyon, in his deepest tone, half rising, and holding by the arms of his chair, "these subjects touch me with too sharp a point for you to be justified in thrusting them on me out of mere levity. Is there any good you seek or any injury you fear in relation to them?"

"Precisely, sir. We shall come now to an understanding. Suppose I believed that the young lady who goes by the name of Miss Lyon was the daughter of Bycliffe?"

Mr. Lyon moved his lips silently.

"And suppose I had reason to suspect that there would be some great advantage for her if the law knew who was her father?"

"Sir!" said Mr. Lyon, shaken out of all reticence, "I would not conceal it. She believed herself to be my daughter. But I will bear all things rather than deprive her of a right. Nevertheless I appeal to the pity of any fellow-man, not to thrust himself between her and me, but to let me disclose the truth to her myself."

"All in good time," said Christian. "We must do nothing rash. Then Miss Lyon is Annette's child?"

The minister shivered as if the edge of a knife had been drawn across his hand. But the tone of this question, by the very fact that it intensified his antipathy to Christian, enabled him to collect himself for what must be simply the endurance of a painful operation. After a moment or two he said more coolly, "It is true, sir. Her mother became my wife. Proceed with any statement which may concern my duty."

"I have no more to say than this: If there's a prize that the law might hand over to Bycliffe's daughter, I am much mistaken if there isn't a lawyer who'll take precious good care to keep the law hoodwinked. And that lawyer is Mat Jermyn. Why, my good sir, if you've been taking Jermyn into your confidence, you've been setting the fox to keep off the weasel. It strikes me that when you were made a little anxious about those articles of poor Bycliffe's, you put Jermyn on making inquiries of me. Eh? I think I am right?"

"I do not deny it."

"Ah!—it was very well you did, for by that means I've

found out that he's got hold of some secrets about Bycliffe which he means to stifle. Now, sir, if you desire any justice for your daughter — step-daughter, I should say — don't so much as wink to yourself before Jermyn; and if you've got any papers or things of that sort that may come in evidence, as these confounded rascals the lawyers call it, clutch them tight, for if they get into Jermyn's hands they may soon fly up the chimney. Have I said enough?"

"I had not purposed any further communication with Mr. Jermyn, sir; indeed, I have nothing further to communicate. Except that one fact concerning my daughter's birth, which I have erred in concealing from her, I neither seek disclosures nor do I tremble before them."

"Then I have your word that you will be silent about this conversation between us? It is for your daughter's interest, mind."

"Sir, I shall be silent," said Mr. Lyon, with cold gravity. "Unless," he added, with an acumen as to possibilities rather disturbing to Christian's confident contempt for the old man — "unless I were called upon by some tribunal to declare the whole truth in this relation; in which case I should submit myself to that authority of investigation which is a requisite of social order."

Christian departed, feeling satisfied that he had got the utmost to be obtained at present out of the Dissenting preacher, whom he had not dared to question more closely. He must look out for chance lights, and perhaps, too, he might catch a stray hint by stirring the sediment of Mr. Crowder's memory. But he must not venture on inquiries that might be noticed. He was in awe of Jermyn.

When Mr. Lyon was alone he paced up and down among his books, and thought aloud, in order to relieve himself after the constraint of this interview. "I will not wait for the urgency of necessity," he said, more than once. "I will tell the child without compulsion. And then I shall fear nothing. And an unwonted spirit of tenderness has filled her of late. She will forgive me."

CHAPTER XXVI.

Consideration like an angel came
 And whipped the offending Adam out of her ;
 Leaving her body as a paradise
 To envelop and contain celestial spirits.

SHAKESPEARE : *Henry V.*

THE next morning, after much prayer for the needful strength and wisdom, Mr. Lyon came down-stairs with the resolution that another day should not pass without the fulfilment of the task he had laid on himself; but what hour he should choose for his solemn disclosure to Esther, must depend on their mutual occupations. Perhaps he must defer it till they sat up alone together, after Lyddy was gone to bed. But at breakfast Esther said, —

"To-day is a holiday, father. My pupils are all going to Duffield to see the wild beasts. What have you got to do to-day? Come, you are eating no breakfast. Oh, Lyddy, Lyddy, the eggs are hard again. I wish you would not read Alleyne's 'Alarm' before breakfast; it makes you cry and forget the eggs."

"They *are* hard, and that's the truth; but there's hearts as are harder, Miss Esther," said Lyddy.

"I think not," said Esther. "This is leathery enough for the heart of the most obdurate Jew. Pray give it little Zachary for a football."

"Dear, dear, don't you be so light, miss. We may all be dead before night."

"You speak out of season, my good Lyddy," said Mr. Lyon, wearily; "depart into the kitchen."

"What have you got to do to-day, father?" persisted Esther. "I have a holiday."

Mr. Lyon felt as if this were a fresh summons not to delay. "I have something of great moment to do, my dear; and since you are not otherwise demanded, I will ask you to come and sit with me up-stairs."

Esther wondered what there could be on her father's mind more pressing than his morning studies.

She soon knew. Motionless, but mentally stirred as she had never been before, Esther listened to her mother's story,

and to the outpouring of her step-father's long-pent-up experience. The rays of the morning sun which fell athwart the books, the sense of the beginning day, had deepened the solemnity more than night would have done. All knowledge which alters our lives penetrates us more when it comes in the early morning: the day that has to be travelled with something new and perhaps forever sad in its light, is an image of the life that spreads beyond. But at night the time of rest is near.

Mr. Lyon regarded his narrative as a confession — as a revelation to this beloved child of his own miserable weakness and error. But to her it seemed a revelation of another sort: her mind seemed suddenly enlarged by a vision of passion and struggle, of delight and renunciation, in the lot of beings who had hitherto been a dull enigma to her. And in the act of unfolding to her that he was not her real father, but had only striven to cherish her as a father, had only longed to be loved as a father, the odd, wayworn, unworldly man became the object of a new sympathy in which Esther felt herself exalted. Perhaps this knowledge would have been less powerful within her, but for the mental preparation that had come during the last two months from her acquaintance with Felix Holt, which had taught her to doubt the infallibility of her own standard, and raised a presentiment of moral depths that were hidden from her.

Esther had taken her place opposite to her father, and had not moved even her clasped hands while he was speaking. But after the long outpouring in which he seemed to lose the sense of everything but the memories he was giving utterance to, he paused a little while and then said timidly, —

"This is a late retrieval of a long error, Esther. I make not excuses for myself, for we ought to strive that our affections be rooted in the truth. Nevertheless you —"

Esther had risen, and had glided on to the wooden stool on a level with her father's chair, where he was accustomed to lay books. She wanted to speak, but the floodgates could not be opened for words alone. She threw her arms round the old man's neck and sobbed out with a passionate cry, "Father, father! forgive me if I have not loved you enough. I will — I will!"

The old man's little delicate frame was shaken by a surprise and joy that were almost painful in their intensity. He had been going to ask forgiveness of her who asked it for herself. In that moment of supreme complex emotion one ray

of the minister's joy was the thought, "Surely the work of grace is begun in her — surely here is a heart that the Lord hath touched."

They sat so, enclasped in silence, while Esther relieved her full heart. When she raised her head, she sat quite still for a minute or two looking fixedly before her, and keeping one little hand in the minister's. Presently she looked at him and said, —

"Then you lived like a working man, father; you were very, very poor. Yet my mother had been used to luxury. She was well born — she was a lady."

"It is true, my dear; it was a poor life that I could give her."

Mr. Lyon answered in utter dimness as to the course Esther's mind was taking. He had anticipated before his disclosure, from his long-standing discernment of tendencies in her which were often the cause of silent grief to him, that the discovery likely to have the keenest interest for her would be that her parents had a higher rank than that of the poor Dissenting preacher; but she had shown that other and better sensibilities were predominant. He rebuked himself now for a hasty and shallow judgment concerning the child's inner life, and waited for new clearness.

"But that must be the best life, father," said Esther, suddenly rising, with a flush across her paleness, and standing with her head thrown a little backward, as if some illumination had given her a new decision. "That must be the best life."

"What life, my dear child?"

"Why, that where one bears and does everything because of some great and strong feeling — so that this and that in one's circumstances don't signify."

"Yea, verily; but the feeling that should be thus supreme is devotedness to the Divine Will."

Esther did not speak; her father's words did not fit on to the impressions wrought in her by what he had told her. She sat down again, and said, more quietly, —

"Mamma did not speak much of my — first father?"

"Not much, dear. She said he was beautiful to the eye, and good and generous; and that his family was of those who have been long privileged among their fellows. But now I will deliver to you the letters, which, together with a ring and locket, are the only visible memorials she retained of him."

Mr. Lyon reached and delivered to Esther the box contain-

ing the relics. "Take them, and examine them in privacy, my dear. And that I may no more err by concealment, I will tell you some late occurrences that bear on these memorials, though to my present apprehension doubtfully and confusedly."

He then narrated to Esther all that had passed between himself and Christian. The possibility — to which Mr. Lyon's alarms had pointed — that her real father might still be living, was a new shock. She could not speak about it to her present father, but it was registered in silence as a painful addition to the uncertainties which she suddenly saw hanging over her life.

"I have little confidence in this man's allegations," Mr. Lyon ended. "I confess his presence and speech are to me as the jarring of metal. He bears the stamp of one who has never conceived aught of more sanctity than the lust of the eye and the pride of life. He hints at some possible inheritance for you, and denounces mysteriously the devices of Mr. Jermyn. All this may or may not have a true foundation. But it is not my part to move in this matter save on a clearer showing."

"Certainly not, father," said Esther, eagerly. A little while ago, these problematic prospects might have set her dreaming pleasantly; but now, for some reasons that she could not have put distinctly into words, they affected her with dread.

CHAPTER XXVII.

To hear with eyes is part of love's rare wit.

SHAKESPEARE: *Sonnets*.

Custom calls me to't:

What custom wills, in all things should we do't,
The dust on antique time would lie unswept,
And mountainous error be too highly heaped
For truth to over-peer. — *Coriolanus*.

In the afternoon Mr. Lyon went out to see the sick amongst his flock, and Esther, who had been passing the morning in dwelling on the memories and the few remaining relics of her parents, was left alone in the parlor amidst the lingering odors of the early dinner, not easily got rid of in that small house. Rich people, who know nothing of these vulgar details, can hardly imagine their significance in the history of

multitudes of human lives in which the sensibilities are never adjusted to the external conditions. Esther always felt so much discomfort from those odors that she usually seized any possibility of escaping from them, and to-day they oppressed her the more because she was weary with long-continued agitation. Why did she not put on her bonnet as usual and get out into the open air? It was one of those pleasant November afternoons — pleasant in the wide country — when the sunshine is on the clinging brown leaves of the young oaks, and the last yellow leaves of the elms flutter down in the fresh but not eager breeze. But Esther sat still on the sofa — pale and with reddened eyelids, her curls all pushed back carelessly, and her elbow resting on the ridgy black horse-hair, which usually almost set her teeth on edge if she pressed it even through her sleeve — while her eyes rested blankly on the dull street. Lyddy had said, "Miss, you look sadly; if you can't take a walk, go and lie down." She had never seen the curls in such disorder, and she reflected that there had been a death from typhus recently. But the obstinate Miss only shook her head.

Esther was waiting for the sake of — not a probability, but — a mere possibility, which made the brothy odors endurable. Apparently, in less than a half an hour, the possibility came to pass, for she changed her attitude, almost started from her seat, sat down again, and listened eagerly. If Lyddy should send him away, could she herself rush out and call him back? Why not? Such things were permissible where it was understood, from the necessity of the case, that there was only friendship. But Lyddy opened the door and said, "Here's Mr. Holt, miss, wants to know if you'll give him leave to come in. I told him you was sadly."

"Oh yes, Lyddy, beg him to come in."

"I should not have persevered," said Felix, as they shook hands, "only I know Lyddy's dismal way. But you do look ill," he went on, as he seated himself at the other end of the sofa. "Or rather — for that's a false way of putting it — you look as if you had been very much distressed. Do you mind about my taking notice of it?"

He spoke very kindly, and looked at her more persistently than he had ever done before, when her hair was perfect.

"You are quite right. I am not at all ill. But I have been very much agitated this morning. My father has been telling me things I never heard before about my mother, and giving me things that belonged to her. She died when I was a very

"Then it is no new pain or trouble for you and Mr. Lyon? I could not help being anxious to know that."

Esther passed her hand over her brow before she answered. "I hardly know whether it is pain, or something better than pleasure. It has made me see things I was blind to before — depths in my father's nature."

As she said this, she looked at Felix, and their eyes met very gravely.

"It is such a beautiful day," he said, "it would do you good to go into the air. Let me take you along the river towards Little Treby, will you?"

"I will put my bonnet on," said Esther, unhesitatingly, though they had never walked out together before.

It is true that to get into the fields they had to pass through the street; and when Esther saw some acquaintances, she reflected that her walking alone with Felix might be a subject of remark — all the more because of his cap, patched boots, no cravat, and thick stick. Esther was a little amazed herself at what she had come to. So our lives glide on: the river ends we don't know where, and the sea begins, and then there is no more jumping ashore.

When they were in the streets Esther hardly spoke. Felix talked with his usual readiness, as easily as if he were not doing it solely to divert her thoughts, first about Job Tudge's delicate chest, and the probability that the little white-faced monkey would not live long; and then about a miserable beginning of a night-school, which was all he could get together at Sproxton; and the dismalness of that hamlet, which was a sort of lip to the coalpit on one side and the "public" on the other — and yet a paradise compared with the wynds of Glasgow, where there was little more than a chink of daylight to show the hatred in women's faces.

But soon they got into the fields, where there was a right of way towards Little Treby, now following the course of the river, now crossing towards a lane, and now turning into a cart-track through a plantation.

"Here we are!" said Felix, when they had crossed the wooden bridge, and were treading on the slanting shadows made by the elm-trunks. "I think this is delicious. I never feel less unhappy than in these late autumn afternoons when they are sunny."

"Less unhappy! There now!" said Esther, smiling at him with some of her habitual sauciness, "I have caught you in self-contradiction. I have heard you quite furious against

puling, melancholy people. If I had said what you have just said, you would have given me a long lecture, and told me to go home and interest myself in the reason of the rule of three."

"Very likely," said Felix, beating the weeds, according to the foible of our common humanity when it has a stick in its hand. "But I don't think myself a fine fellow because I'm melancholy. I don't measure my force by the negations in me, and think my soul must be a mighty one because it is more given to idle suffering than to beneficent activity. That's what your favorite gentlemen do, of the Byronic-bilious style."

"I don't admit that those are my favorite gentlemen."

"I've heard you defend them — gentlemen like your *Rénés*, who have no particular talent for the finite, but a general sense that the infinite is the right thing for them. They might as well boast of nausea as a proof of a strong inside."

"Stop, stop! You run on in that way to get out of my reach. I convicted you of confessing that you are melancholy."

"Yes," said Felix, thrusting his left hand into his pocket, with a shrug; "as I could confess to a great many other things I'm not proud of. The fact is, there are not many easy lots to be drawn in the world at present; and such as they are I am not envious of them. I don't say life is not worth having: it is worth having to a man who has some sparks of sense and feeling and bravery in him. And the finest fellow of all would be the one who could be glad to have lived because the world was chiefly miserable, and his life had come to help some one who needed it. He would be the man who had the most powers and the fewest selfish wants. But I'm not up to the level of what I see to be best. I'm often a hungry, discontented fellow."

"Why have you made your life so hard then?" said Esther, rather frightened as she asked the question. "It seems to me you have tried to find just the most difficult task."

"Not at all," said Felix, with curt decision. "My course was a very simple one. It was pointed out to me by conditions that I saw as clearly as I see the bars of this stile. It's a difficult stile too," added Felix, striding over. "Shall I help you, or will you be left to yourself?"

"I can do without help, thank you."

"It was all simple enough," continued Felix, as they walked on. "If I meant to put a stop to the sale of those drugs, I must keep my mother, and of course at her age she would not leave the place she had been used to. And I had made up my mind against what they call genteel businesses."

"But suppose every one did as you do? Please to forgive me for saying so; but I cannot see why you could not have lived as honorably with some employment that presupposes education and refinement."

"Because you can't see my history or my nature," said Felix, bluntly. "I have to determine for myself, and not for other men. I don't blame them, or think I am better than they; their circumstances are different. I would never choose to withdraw myself from the labor and common burthen of the world; but I do choose to withdraw myself from the push and the scramble for money and position. Any man is at liberty to call me a fool, and say that mankind are benefited by the push and the scramble in the long-run. But I care for the people who live now and will not be living when the long-run comes. As it is, I prefer going shares with the unlucky."

Esther did not speak, and there was silence between them for a minute or two, till they passed through a gate into a plantation where there was no large timber, but only thin-stemmed trees and underwood, so that the sunlight fell on the mossy spaces which lay open here and there.

"See how beautiful those stooping birch-stems are with the light on them!" said Felix. "Here is an old felled trunk they have not thought worth carrying away. Shall we sit down a little while?"

"Yes; the mossy ground with the dry leaves sprinkled over it is delightful to one's feet." Esther sat down and took off her bonnet, that the light breeze might fall on her head. Felix, too, threw down his cap and stick, lying on the ground with his back against the felled trunk.

"I wish I felt more as you do," she said, looking at the point of her foot, which was playing with a tuft of moss. "I can't help caring very much what happens to me. And you seem to care so little about yourself."

"You are thoroughly mistaken," said Felix. "It is just because I'm a very ambitious fellow, with very hungry passions, wanting a great deal to satisfy me, that I have chosen to give up what people call worldly good. At least that has been one determining reason. It all depends on what a man gets into his consciousness — what life thrusts into his mind, so that it becomes present to him as remorse is present to the guilty, or a mechanical problem to an inventive genius. There are two things I've got present in that way: one of them is the picture of what I should hate to be. I'm determined never to go about making my face simpering or solemn, and

telling professional lies for profit; or to get tangled in affairs where I must wink at dishonesty and pocket the proceeds, and justify that knavery as part of a system that I can't alter. If I once went into that sort of struggle for success, I should want to win — I should defend the wrong that I had once identified myself with. I should become everything that I see now beforehand to be detestable. And what's more, I should do this, as men are doing it every day, for a ridiculously small prize — perhaps for none at all — perhaps for the sake of two parlors, a rank eligible for the churchwardenship, a discontented wife, and several unhopeful children."

Esther felt a terrible pressure on her heart — the certainty of her remoteness from Felix — the sense that she was utterly trivial to him.

"The other thing that's got into my mind like a splinter," said Felix, after a pause, "is the life of the miserable — the spawning life of vice and hunger. I'll never be one of the sleek dogs. The old Catholics are right, with their higher rule and their lower. Some are called to subject themselves to a harder discipline, and renounce things voluntarily which are lawful for others. It is the old word — 'necessity is laid upon me.'"

"It seems to me you are stricter than my father is."

"No. I quarrel with no delight that is not base or cruel, but one must sometimes accommodate one's self to a small share. That is the lot of the majority. I would wish the minority joy, only they don't want my wishes."

Again there was silence. Esther's cheeks were hot in spite of the breeze that sent her hair floating backward. She felt an inward strain, a demand on her to see things in a light that was not easy or soothing. When Felix had asked her to walk, he had seemed so kind, so alive to what might be her feelings, that she had thought herself nearer to him than she had ever been before; but since they had come out, he had appeared to forget all that. And yet she was conscious that this impatience of hers was very petty. Battling in this way with her own little impulses, and looking at the birch-stems opposite till her gaze was too wide for her to see anything distinctly, she was unaware how long they had remained without speaking. She did not know that Felix had changed his attitude a little, and was resting his elbow on the tree-trunk, while he supported his head, which was turned towards her. Suddenly he said, in a lower tone than was habitual to him, —

"You are very beautiful."

She started and looked round at him, to see whether his face would give some help to the interpretation of this novel speech. He was looking up at her quite calmly, very much as a reverential Protestant might look at a picture of the Virgin, with a devoutness suggested by the type rather than by the image. Esther's vanity was not in the least gratified: she felt that, somehow or other, Felix was going to reproach her.

"I wonder," he went on, still looking at her, "whether the subtle measuring of forces will ever come to measuring the force there would be in one beautiful woman whose mind was as noble as her face was beautiful — who made a man's passion for her rush in one current with all the great aims of his life."

Esther's eyes got hot and smarting. It was no use trying to be dignified. She had turned away her head, and now said, rather bitterly, "It is difficult for a woman ever to try to be anything good when she is not believed in — when it is always supposed that she must be contemptible."

"No, dear Esther," — it was the first time Felix had been prompted to call her by her Christian name, and as he did so he laid his large hand on her two little hands, which were clasped on her knees. "You don't believe that I think you contemptible. When I first saw you —"

"I know, I know," said Esther, interrupting him impetuously, but still looking away. "You mean you did think me contemptible then. But it was very narrow of you to judge me in that way, when my life had been so different from yours. I have great faults. I know I am selfish, and think too much of my own small tastes and too little of what affects others. But I am not stupid. I am not unfeeling. I can see what is better."

"But I have not done you injustice since I knew more of you," said Felix, gently.

"Yes, you have," said Esther, turning and smiling at him through her tears. "You talk to me like an angry pedagogue. Were *you* always wise? Remember the time when you were foolish or naughty."

"That is not far off," said Felix, curtly, taking away his hand, and clasping it with the other at the back of his head. The talk, which seemed to be introducing a mutual understanding, such as had not existed before, seemed to have undergone some check.

"Shall we get up and walk back now?" said Esther, after a few moments.

"No," said Felix, entreatingly. "Don't move yet. I dare say we shall never walk together or sit here again."

"Why not?"

"Because I am a man who am warned by visions. Those old stories of visions and dreams guiding men have their truth: we are saved by making the future present to ourselves."

"I wish I could get visions, then," said Esther, smiling at him, with an effort at playfulness, in resistance to something vaguely mournful within her.

"That is what I want," said Felix, looking at her very earnestly. "Don't turn your head. Do look at me, and then I shall know if I may go on speaking. I do believe in you; but I want you to have such a vision of the future that you may never lose your best self. Some charm or other may be flung about you—some of your attar-of-rose fascinations—and nothing but a good strong terrible vision will save you. And if it did save you, you might be that woman I was thinking of a little while ago when I looked at your face: the woman whose beauty makes a great task easier to men instead of turning them away from it. I am not likely to see such fine issues; but they may come where a woman's spirit is finely touched. I should like to be sure they would come to you."

"Why are you not likely to know what becomes of me?" said Esther, turning away her eyes in spite of his command. "Why should you not always be my father's friend and mine?"

"Oh, I shall go away as soon as I can to some large town," said Felix, in his more usual tone,—"some ugly, wicked, miserable place. I want to be a demagogue of a new sort; an honest one, if possible, who will tell the people they are blind and foolish, and neither flatter them nor fatten on them. I have my heritage—an order I belong to. I have the blood of a line of handicraftsmen in my veins, and I want to stand up for the lot of the handicraftsman as a good lot, in which a man may be better trained to all the best functions of his nature than if he belonged to the grimacing set who have visiting-cards, and are proud to be thought richer than their neighbors."

"Would nothing ever make it seem right to you to change your mind?" said Esther (she had rapidly woven some possibilities out of the new uncertainties in her own lot, though she would not for the world have had Felix know of her

weaving). "Suppose, by some means or other, a fortune might come to you honorably — by marriage, or in any other unexpected way — would you see no change in your course?"

"No," said Felix, peremptorily; "I will never be rich. I don't count that as any peculiar virtue. Some men do well to accept riches, but that is not my inward vocation: I have no fellow-feeling with the rich as a class; the habits of their lives are odious to me. Thousands of men have wedded poverty because they expect to go to heaven for it; I don't expect to go to heaven for it, but I wed it because it enables me to do what I most want to do on earth. Whatever the hopes for the world may be — whether great or small — I am a man of this generation; I will try to make life less bitter for a few within my reach. It is held reasonable enough to toil for the fortunes of a family, though it may turn to imbecility in the third generation. I choose a family with more chances in it."

Esther looked before her dreamily till she said, "That seems a hard lot; yet it is a great one." She rose to walk back.

"Then you don't think I'm a fool," said Felix, loudly, starting to his feet, and then stooping to gather up his cap and stick.

"Of course you suspected me of that stupidity."

"Well — women, unless they are Saint Therasas or Elizabeth Frys, generally think this sort of thing madness, unless when they read of it in the Bible."

"A woman can hardly ever choose in that way; she is dependent on what happens to her. She must take meaner things, because only meaner things are within her reach."

"Why, can you imagine yourself choosing hardship as the better lot?" said Felix, looking at her with a sudden question in his eyes.

"Yes, I can," she said, flushing over neck and brow.

Their words were charged with a meaning dependent entirely on the secret consciousness of each. Nothing had been said which was necessarily personal. They walked a few yards along the road by which they had come, without further speech, till Felix said gently, "Take my arm." She took it, and they walked home so, entirely without conversation. Felix was struggling as a firm man struggles with a temptation, seeing beyond it and disbelieving its lying promise. Esther was struggling as a woman struggles with the yearning for some expression of love, and with vexation under that subjection to a yearning which is not likely to be satisfied.

Each was conscious of a silence which each was unable to break, till they entered Malthouse Lane, and were within a few yards of the minister's door.

"It is getting dusk," Felix then said; "will Mr. Lyon be anxious about you?"

"No, I think not. Lyddy would tell him that I went out with you, and that you carried a large stick," said Esther, with her light laugh.

Felix went in with Esther to take tea, but the conversation was entirely between him and Mr. Lyon about the tricks of canvassing, the foolish personality of the placards, and the probabilities of Transome's return, as to which Felix declared himself to have become indifferent. This scepticism made the minister uneasy: he had great belief in the old political watchwords, had preached that universal suffrage and no ballot were agreeable to the will of God, and liked to believe that a visible "instrument" was forthcoming in the Radical Candidate who had pronounced emphatically against Whig finality. Felix, being in a perverse mood, contended that universal suffrage would be equally agreeable to the devil; that he would change his politics a little, have a larger traffic, and see himself more fully represented in Parliament.

"Nay, my friend," said the minister, "you are again sporting with paradox; for you will not deny that you glory in the name of Radical, or Root-and-branch man, as they said in the great times when Nonconformity was in its giant youth."

"A Radical — yes; but I want to go to some roots a good deal lower down than the franchise."

"Truly there is a work within which cannot be dispensed with; but it is our preliminary work to free men from the stifled life of political nullity, and bring them into what Milton calls 'the liberal air,' wherein alone can be wrought the final triumphs of the Spirit."

"With all my heart. But while Caliban is Caliban, though you multiply him by a million, he'll worship every Trinculo that carries a bottle. I forget, though — you don't read Shakspeare, Mr. Lyon."

"I am bound to confess that I have so far looked into a volume of Esther's as to conceive your meaning; but the fantasies therein were so little to be reconciled with a steady contemplation of that divine economy which is hidden from sense and revealed to faith, that I forebore the reading, as likely to perturb my ministrations."

Esther sat by in unusual silence. The conviction that

Felix willed her exclusion from his life was making it plain that something more than friendship between them was not so thoroughly out of the question as she had always inwardly asserted. In her pain that his choice lay aloof from her, she was compelled frankly to admit to herself the longing that it had been otherwise, and that he had entreated her to share his difficult life. He was like no one else to her: he had seemed to bring at once a law, and the love that gave strength to obey the law. Yet the next moment, stung by his independence of her, she denied that she loved him; she had only longed for a moral support under the negations of her life. If she were not to have that support, all effort seemed useless.

Esther had been so long used to hear the formulas of her father's belief without feeling or understanding them, that they had lost all power to touch her. The first religious experience of her life — the first self-questioning, the first voluntary subjection, the first longing to acquire the strength of greater motives and obey the more strenuous rule — had come to her through Felix Holt. No wonder that she felt as if the loss of him were inevitable back-sliding.

But was it certain that she should lose him? She did not believe that he was really indifferent to her.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

TITUS. But what says Jupiter, I ask thee?

CLOWN. Alas, sir, I know not Jupiter:

I never drank with him in all my life.

Titus Andronicus.

THE multiplication of uncomplimentary placards noticed by Mr. Lyon and Felix Holt was one of several signs that the days of nomination and election were approaching. The presence of the Revising Barrister in Treby was not only an opportunity for all persons not otherwise busy to show their zeal for the purification of the voting-lists, but also to reconcile private ease and public duty by standing about the streets and lounging at doors.

It was no light business for Trebians to form an opinion; the mere fact of a public functionary with an unfamiliar title was enough to give them pause, as a premise that was not to be quickly started from. To Mr. Pink, the saddler, for example, until some distinct injury or benefit had accrued to

him, the existence of the Revising Barrister was like the existence of the young giraffe which Wombwell had lately brought into those parts — it was to be contemplated, and not criticised. Mr. Pink professed a deep-dyed Toryism; but he regarded all fault-finding as Radical and somewhat impious, as disturbing to trade, and likely to offend the gentry or the servants through whom their harness was ordered: there was a Nemesis in things which made objection unsafe, and even the Reform Bill was a sort of electric eel which a thriving tradesman had better leave alone. It was only the "Papists" who lived far enough off to be spoken of uncivily.

But Mr. Pink was fond of news, which he collected and retailed with perfect impartiality, noting facts and rejecting comments. Hence he was well pleased to have his shop so constant a place of resort for loungers, that to many Trebians there was a strong association between the pleasures of gossip and the smell of leather. He had the satisfaction of chalking and cutting, and of keeping his journeymen close at work, at the very time that he learned from his visitors who were those whose votes had been called in question before His Honor, how Lawyer Jermyn had been too much for Lawyer Labron about Todd's cottages, and how, in the opinion of some townsmen, this looking into the value of people's property, and swearing it down below a certain sum, was a nasty inquisitorial kind of thing; while others observed that being nice to a few pounds was all nonsense — they should put the figure high enough, and then never mind if a voter's qualification was thereabouts. But, said Mr. Sims the auctioneer, everything was done for the sake of the lawyers. Mr. Pink suggested impartially that lawyers must live; but Mr. Sims, having a ready auctioneering wit, did not see that so many of them need live, or that babies were born lawyers. Mr. Pink felt that this speculation was complicated by the ordering of side-saddles for lawyers' daughters, and, returning to the firm ground of fact, stated that it was getting dusk.

The dusk seemed deepened the next moment by a tall figure obstructing the doorway, at sight of whom Mr. Pink rubbed his hands and smiled and bowed more than once, with evident solicitude to show honor where honor was due, while he said, —

"Mr. Christian, sir, how do you do, sir?"

Christian answered with the condescending familiarity of a superior. "Very badly, I can tell you, with these confounded

braces that you were to make such a fine job of. See, old fellow, they've burst out again."

"Very sorry, sir. Can you leave them with me?"

"Oh yes, I'll leave them. What's the news, eh?" said Christian, half seating himself on a high stool, and beating his boot with a hand-whip.

"Well, sir, we look to you to tell us that," said Mr. Pink, with a knowing smile. "You're at headquarters — eh, sir? That was what I said to Mr. Scales the other day. He came for some straps, Mr. Scales did, and he asked that question in pretty near the same terms that you've done, sir, and I answered him, as I may say, ditto. Not meaning any disrespect to you, sir, but a way of speaking."

"Come, that's gammon, Pink," said Christian. "You know everything. You can tell me, if you will, who is the fellow employed to paste up Transome's handbills?"

"What do *you* say, Mr. Sims?" said Pink, looking at the auctioneer.

"Why, you know and I know well enough. It's Tommy Trounsem — an old, crippling, half-mad fellow. Most people know Tommy. I've employed him myself for charity."

"Where shall I find him?" said Christian.

"At the Cross-Keys, in Pollard's End, most likely," said Mr. Sims. "I don't know where he puts himself when he isn't at the public."

"He was a stoutish fellow fifteen year ago, when he carried pots," said Mr. Pink.

"Ay, and has snared many a hare in his time," said Mr. Sims. "But he was always a little cracked. Lord bless you! he used to swear he had a right to the Transome estate."

"Why, what put that notion into his head?" said Christian, who had learned more than he expected.

"The lawing, sir — nothing but the lawing about the estate. There was a deal of it twenty year ago," said Mr. Pink. "Tommy happened to turn up hereabout at that time; a big, lungeous fellow, who would speak disrespectfully of anybody."

"Oh, he meant no harm," said Mr. Sims. "He was fond of a drop to drink, and not quite right in the upper story, and he could hear no difference between Trounsem and Transome. It's an odd way of speaking they have in that part where he was born, — a little north'ard. You'll hear it in his tongue now, if you talk to him."

"At the Cross-Keys I shall find him, eh?" said Christian, getting off his stool. "Good-day, Pink — good-day."

Christian went straight from the saddler's to Quorlen's, the Tory printer's, with whom he had contrived a political spree. Quorlen was a new man in Treby, who had so reduced the trade of Dow, the old hereditary printer, that Dow had lapsed to Whiggery and Radicalism and opinions in general, so far as they were contented to express themselves in a small stock of types. Quorlen had brought his Duffield wit with him, and insisted that religion and joking were the handmaids of politics; on which principle he and Christian undertook the joking, and left the religion to the Rector. The joke at present in question was a practical one. Christian, turning into the shop, merely said, "I've found him out—give me the placards;" and, tucking a thickish flat bundle, wrapped in a black glazed cotton bag, under his arm, walked out into the dusk again.

"Suppose now," he said to himself, as he strode along—"suppose there should be some secret to be got out of this old scamp, or some notion that's as good as a secret to those who know how to use it? That would be virtue rewarded. But I'm afraid the old tosspot is not likely to be good for much. There's truth in wine, and there may be some in gin and muddy beer; but whether it's truth worth my knowing, is another question. I've got plenty of truth in my time out of men who were half-seas-over, but never any that was worth a sixpence to me."

The Cross-Keys was a very old-fashioned "public:" its bar was a big rambling kitchen, with an undulating brick floor; the small-paned windows threw an interesting obscurity over the far-off dresser, garnished with pewter and tin, and with large dishes that seemed to speak of better times; the two settles were half pushed under the wide-mouthed chimney; and the grate with its brick hobs, massive iron crane, and various pothooks, suggested a generous plenty possibly existent in all moods and tenses except the indicative present. One way of getting an idea of our fellow-countrymen's miseries is to go and look at their pleasures. The Cross-Keys had a fungous-featured landlord and a yellow sickly landlady, with a large white kerchief bound round her cap, as if her head had recently required surgery; it had doctored ale, an odor of bad tobacco, and remarkably strong cheese. It was not what Astræa, when come back, might be expected to approve as the scene of ecstatic enjoyment for the beings whose special prerogative it is to lift their sublime faces towards heaven. Still, there was ample space on the hearth—accommodation

for narrative bagmen or boxmen — room for a man to stretch his legs; his brain was not pressed upon by a white wall within a yard of him, and the light did not stare in mercilessly on bare ugliness, turning the fire to ashes. Compared with some beerhouses of this more advanced period, the Cross-Keys of that day presented a high standard of pleasure.

But though this venerable "public" had not failed to share in the recent political excitement of drinking, the pleasures it offered were not at this early hour of the evening sought by a numerous company. There were only three or four pipes being smoked by the firelight, but it was enough for Christian when he found that one of these was being smoked by the bill-sticker, whose large flat basket, stuffed with placards, leaned near him against the settle. So splendid an apparition as Christian was not a little startling at the Cross-Keys, and was gazed at in expectant silence; but he was a stranger in Pollard's End, and was taken for the highest style of traveller when he declared that he was deucedly thirsty, ordered sixpennyworth of gin and a large jug of water, and, putting a few drops of the spirit into his own glass, invited Tommy Trounsem, who sat next him, to help himself. Tommy was not slower than a shaking hand obliged him to be in accepting this invitation. He was a tall broad-shouldered old fellow, who had once been good-looking; but his cheeks and chest were both hollow now, and his limbs were shrunken.

"You've got some bills there, master, eh?" said Christian, pointing to the basket. "Is there an auction coming on?"

"Auction? no," said Tommy, with a gruff hoarseness, which was the remnant of a jovial bass, and with an accent which differed from the Trebian fitfully, as an early habit is wont to reassert itself. "I've nought to do wi' auctions; I'm a pol'tical charieter. It's me am getting Trounsem into Parl'ment."

"Trounsem, says he," the landlord observed, taking out his pipe with a low laugh. "It's Transome, sir. Maybe you don't belong to this part. It's the candidate 'ull do most for the working men, and's proved it too, in the way o' being open-handed and wishing 'em to enjoy themselves. If I'd twenty votes, I'd give one for Transome, and I don't care who hears me."

The landlord peeped out from his fungous cluster of features with a beery confidence that the high figure of twenty had somehow raised the hypothetic value of his vote.

"Spilkins, now," said Tommy, waving his hand to the landlord, "you let one genelman speak to another, will you? This

gentleman wants to know about my bills. Does he, or doesn't he?"

"What then? I spoke according," said the landlord, mildly holding his own.

"You're all very well, Spilkins," returned Tommy, "but y'aren't me. I know what the bills are. It's public business. I'm none o' your common bill-stickers, master: I've left off sticking up ten guineas reward for a sheep-stealer, or low stuff like that. These are Trounsem's bills; and I'm the rightful family, and so I give him a lift. A Trounsem I am, and a Trounsem I'll be buried; and if Old Nick tries to lay hold on me for poaching, I'll say, 'You be hanged for a lawyer, Old Nick; every hare and pheasant on the Trounsem's land is mine;' and what rises the family, rises old Tommy; and we're going to get into Parl'ment—that's the long and the short on't, master. And I'm the head o' the family, and I stick the bills. There's Johnsons, and Thomsons, and Jacksons, and Billsons; but I'm a Trounsem, I am. What do you say to that, master?"

This appeal, accompanied by a blow on the table, while the landlord winked at the company, was addressed to Christian, who answered, with severe gravity, —

"I say there isn't any work more honorable than bill-sticking."

"No, no," said Tommy, wagging his head from side to side. "I thought you'd come in to that. I thought you'd know better than say contrary. But I'll shake hands wi' you; I don't want to knock any man's head off. I'm a good chap—a sound crock—an old family kep' out o' my rights. I shall go to heaven, for all Old Nick."

As these celestial prospects might imply that a little extra gin was beginning to tell on the bill-sticker, Christian wanted to lose no time in arresting his attention. He laid his hand on Tommy's arm and spoke emphatically.

"But I'll tell you what you bill-stickers are not up to. You should be on the lookout when Debarry's side have stuck up fresh bills, and go and paste yours over them. I know where there's a lot of Debarry's bills now. Come along with me, and I'll show you. We'll paste them over, and then we'll come back and treat the company."

"Hooray!" said Tommy. "Let's be off then."

He was one of the thoroughly inured, originally hale drunkards, and did not easily lose his head or legs or the ordinary amount of method in his talk. Strangers often supposed that

Tommy was tipsy when he had only taken what he called "one blessed pint," chiefly from that glorious contentment with himself and his adverse fortunes which is not usually characteristic of the sober Briton. He knocked the ashes out of his pipe, seized his paste-vessel and his basket, and prepared to start with a satisfactory promise that he could know what he was about.

The landlord and some others had confidently concluded that they understood all about Christian now. He was a Transome's man, come to see after the bill-sticking in Transome's interest. The landlord, telling his yellow wife snappishly to open the door for the gentleman, hoped soon to see him again.

"This is a Transome's house, sir," he observed, "in respect of entertaining customers of that color. I do my duty as a publican, which, if I know it, is to turn back no genelman's money. I say, give every genelman a chanch, and the more the merrier, in Parl'ment and out of it. And if anybody says they want but two Parl'ment men, I say it 'ud be better for trade if there was six of 'em, and voters according."

"Ay, ay," said Christian; "you're a sensible man, landlord. You don't mean to vote for Debarry, then, eh?"

"Not nohow," said the landlord, thinking that where negatives were good the more you had of them the better.

As soon as the door had closed behind Christian and his new companion, Tommy said, —

"Now, master, if you're to be my lantern, don't you be a Jacky Lantern, which I take to mean one as leads you the wrong way. For I tell you what — if you've had the luck to fall in wi' Tommy Trounsem, don't you let him drop."

"No, no — to be sure not," said Christian. "Come along here. We'll go to the Back Brewery wall first."

"No, no; don't you let me drop. Give me a shilling any day you like, and I'll tell you more nor you'll hear from Spilkins in a week. There isna many men like me. I carried pots for fifteen year off and on — what do you think o' that now, for a man as might ha' lived up there at Trounsem Park, and snared his own game? Which I'd ha' done," said Tommy, wagging his head at Christian in the dimness undisturbed by gas. "None o' your shooting for me — it's two to one you'll miss. Snaring's more fishing-like. You bait your hook, and if it isna the fishes' goodwill to come, that's nothing again' the sporting genelman. And that's what I say by snaring."

"But if you'd a right to the Transome estate, how was it

you were kept out of it, old boy? It was some foul shame or other, eh?"

"It's the law — that's what it is. You're a good sort o' chap; I don't mind telling you. There's folks born to property, and there's folks catch hold on it; and the law's made for them as catch hold. I'm pretty deep; I see a good deal further than Spilkins. There was Ned Patch, the pedler, used to say to me, 'You canna read, Tommy,' says he. 'No; thank you,' says I; 'I'm not going to crack my headpiece to make myself as big a fool as you.' I was fond o' Ned. Many's the pot we've had together."

"I see well enough you're deep, Tommy. How came you to know you were born to property?"

"It was the regester — the parish regester," said Tommy, with his knowing wag of the head, "that shows as you was born. I allays felt it inside me as I was somebody, and I could see other chaps thought it on me too; and so one day at Littleshaw, where I kep ferrets and a little bit of a public, there comes a fine man looking after me, and walking me up and down wi' questions. And I made out from the clerk as he'd been at the regester; and I gave the clerk a pot or two, and he got it off our parson as the name o' Trounsem was a great name hereabout. And I waits a bit for my fine man to come again. Thinks I, if there's property wants a right owner, I shall be called for; for I didn't know the law then. And I waited and waited, till I see'd no fun i' waiting. So I parted wi' my public and my ferrets — for she was dead a'ready, my wife was, and I hadn't no cumbrance. And off I started a pretty long walk to this country-side, for I could walk for a wager in them days."

"Ah! well, here we are at the Back Brewery wall. Put down your paste and your basket now, old boy, and I'll help you. You paste, and I'll give you the bills, and then you can go on talking."

Tommy obeyed automatically, for he was now carried away by the rare opportunity of talking to a new listener, and was only eager to go on with his story. As soon as his back was turned, and he was stooping over his paste-pot, Christian, with quick adroitness, exchanged the placards in his own bag for those in Tommy's basket. Christian's placards had not been printed at Treby, but were a new lot which had been sent from Duffield that very day — "highly spiced," Quorlen had said, "coming from a pen that was up to that sort of thing." Christian had read the first of the sheaf, and supposed they were all alike. He proceeded to hand one to Tommy, and said —

"Here, old boy, paste this over the other. And so, when you got into this country-side, what did you do?"

"Do? Why, I put up at a good public and ordered the best, for I'd a bit o' money in my pocket; and I axed about, and they said to me, if it's Trounsem business you're after, you go to Lawyer Jermyn. And I went; and says I, going along, he's maybe the fine man as walked me up and down. But no such thing. I'll tell you what Lawyer Jermyn was. He stands you there, and holds you away from him wi' a pole three yards long. He stares at you, and says nothing, till you feel like a Tomfool; and then he threatens you to set the justice on you; and then he's sorry for you, and hands you money, and preaches you a sarmint, and tells you you're a poor man, and he'll give you a bit of advice — and you'd better not be meddling wi' things belonging to the law, else you'll be caught up in a big wheel and fly to bits. And I went of a cold sweat, and I wished I might never come i' sight o' Lawyer Jermyn again. But he says, if you keep i' this neighborhood, behave yourself well, and I'll pertect you. I were deep enough, but it's no use being deep, 'cause you can never know the law. And there's times when the deepest fellow's worst frightened."

"Yes, yes. There! Now for another placard. And so that was all?"

"All?" said Tommy, turning round and holding the paste-brush in suspense. "Don't you be running too quick. 'Thinks I, 'I'll meddle no more. I've got a bit o' money — I'll buy a basket, and be a potman. It's a pleasant life. I shall live at publics and see the world, and pick up 'quaintance, and get a chanch penny.' But when I'd turned into the Red Lion, and got myself warm again wi' a drop o' hot, something jumps into my head. 'Thinks I, Tommy, you've done finely for yourself: you're a rat as has broke up your house to take a journey, and show yourself to a ferret. And then it jumps into my head: I'd once two ferrets as turned on one another, and the little un killed the big un. Says I to the landlady, 'Missis, could you tell me of a lawyer,' says I, 'not very big or fine, but a second size — a pig-potato, like?' — 'That I can,' says she; 'there's one now in the bar parlor.' — 'Be so kind as bring us together,' says I. And she cries out — I think I hear her now — 'Mr. Johnson!' And what do you think?"

At this crisis in Tommy's story the gray clouds, which had been gradually thinning, opened sufficiently to let down the sudden moonlight, and show his poor battered old figure and face in the attitude and with the expression of a narrator sure

of the coming effect on his auditor; his body and neck stretched a little on one side, and his paste-brush held out with an alarming intention of tapping Christian's coat-sleeve at the right moment. Christian started to a safe distance, and said, —

"It's wonderful. I can't tell what to think."

"Then never do you deny Old Nick," said Tommy, with solemnity. "I've believed in him more ever since. Who was Johnson? Why, Johnson was the fine man as had walked me up and down with questions. And I out with it to him then and there. And he speaks me civil, and says, 'Come away wi' me, my good fellow.' And he told me a deal o' law. And he says, Whether you're a Tommy Trounsem or no, it's no good to you, but only to them as have got hold o' the property. If you was a Tommy Trounsem twenty times over, it 'ud be no good, for the law's bought you out; and your life's no good, only to them as have catched hold o' the property. The more you live, the more they'll stick in. Not as they want you now, says he—you're no good to anybody, and you might howl like a dog for iver, and the law 'ud take no notice on you. Says Johnson, I'm doing a kind thing by you, to tell you. For that's the law. And if you want to know the law, master, you ask Johnson. I heard 'em say after, as he was an understrapper at Jermyn's. I've never forgot it from that day to this. But I saw clear enough, as if the law hadn't been again' me, the 'Trounsem estate 'ud ha' been mine. But folks are fools hereabouts, and I've left off talking. The more you tell 'em the truth, the more they'll niver believe you. And I went and bought my basket and the pots and —"

"Come, then, fire away," said Christian. "Here's another placard."

"I'm getting a bit dry, master."

"Well, then, make haste, and you'll have something to drink all the sooner."

Tommy turned to his work again, and Christian, continuing his help, said, "And how long has Mr. Jermyn been employing you?"

"Oh, no particular time — off and on; but a week or two ago he sees me upo' the road, and speaks to me uncommon civil, and tells me to go up to his office, and he'll give me employ. And I was no ways unwilling to stick the bills to get the family into Parl'ment. For there's no man can help the law. And the family's the family, whether you carry pots or no.

Master, I'm uncommon dry; my head's a-turning round; it's talking so long on end."

The unwonted excitement of poor Tommy's memory was producing a reaction.

"Well, Tommy," said Christian, who had just made a discovery among the placards which altered the bent of his thoughts, "you may go back to the Cross-Keys now, if you like; here's a half-crown for you to spend handsomely. I can't go back there myself just yet; but you may give my respects to Spilkins, and mind you paste the rest of the bills early to-morrow morning."

"Ay, ay. But don't you believe too much i' Spilkins," said Tommy, pocketing the half-crown, and showing his gratitude by giving this advice — "he's no harm much — but weak. He thinks he's at the bottom o' things because he scores you up. But I bear him no ill-will. Tommy Trounsem's a good chap; and any day you like to give me half a crown, I'll tell you the same story over again. Not now; I'm dry. Come, help me up wi' these things; you're a younger chap than me. Well, I'll tell Spilkins you'll come again another day."

The moonlight, which had lit up poor Tommy's oratorical attitude, had served to light up for Christian the print of the placards. He had expected the copies to be various, and had turned them half over at different depths of the sheaf before drawing out those he offered to the bill sticker. Suddenly the clearer light had shown him on one of them a name which was just then especially interesting to him, and all the more when occurring in a placard intended to dissuade the electors of North Loamshire from voting for the heir of the Transomes. He hastily turned over the bills that preceded and succeeded, that he might draw out and carry away all of this pattern! for it might turn out to be wiser for him not to contribute to the publicity of handbills which contained allusions to Bycliffe *versus* Transome. There were about a dozen of them; he pressed them together and thrust them into his pocket, returning all the rest to Tommy's basket. To take away this dozen might not be to prevent similar bills from being posted up elsewhere, but he had reason to believe that these were all of the same kind which had been sent to Treby from Duffield.

Christian's interest in his practical joke had died out like a morning rushlight. Apart from this discovery in the placards, old Tommy's story had some indications in it that were worth pondering over. Where was that well-informed Johnson now? Was he still an understrapper of Jermyn's?

With this matter in his thoughts, Christian only turned in hastily at Quorlen's, threw down the black bag which contained the captured Radical handbills, said he had done the job, and hurried back to the Manor that he might study his problem.

CHAPTER XXIX.

I doe believe that, as the gull has severall receptacles in severall creatures, soe there's scarce any creature but hath that emunctorie somewhere.

SIR THOMAS BROWNE.

FANCY what a game at chess would be if all the chessmen had passions and intellects, more or less small and cunning: if you were not only uncertain about your adversary's men, but a little uncertain also about your own; if your knight could shuffle himself on to a new square by the sly; if your bishop, in disgust at your castling, could wheedle your pawns out of their places; and if your pawns, hating you because they are pawns, could make away from their appointed posts that you might get checkmate on a sudden. You might be the longest-headed of deductive reasoners, and yet you might be beaten by your own pawns. You would be especially likely to be beaten, if you depended arrogantly on your mathematical imagination, and regarded your passionate pieces with contempt.

Yet this imaginary chess is easy compared with the game a man has to play against his fellow-men with other fellow-men for his instruments. He thinks himself sagacious, perhaps, because he trusts no bond except that of self-interest; but the only self-interest he can safely rely on is what seems to be such to the mind he would use or govern. Can he ever be sure of knowing this?

Matthew Jermyn was under no misgivings as to the fealty of Johnson. He had "been the making of Johnson;" and this seems to many men a reason for expecting devotion, in spite of the fact that they themselves, though very fond of their own persons and lives, are not at all devoted to the Maker they believe in. Johnson was a most serviceable subordinate. Being a man who aimed at respectability, a family man, who had a good church-pew, subscribed for engravings of banquet pictures where there were portraits of political celebrities, and wished his children to be more unquestionably genteel

than their father, he presented all the more numerous handles of worldly motive by which a judicious superior might keep a hold on him. But this useful regard to respectability had its inconvenience in relation to such a superior: it was a mark of some vanity and some pride, which, if they were not touched just in the right handling-place, were liable to become raw and sensitive. Jermyn was aware of Johnson's weaknesses, and thought he had flattered them sufficiently. But on the point of knowing when we are disagreeable, our human nature is fallible. Our lavender-water, our smiles, our compliments, and other polite falsities, are constantly offensive, when in the very nature of them they can only be meant to attract admiration and regard. Jermyn had often been unconsciously disagreeable to Johnson, over and above the constant offence of being an ostentatious patron. He would never let Johnson dine with his wife and daughters; he would not himself dine at Johnson's house when he was in town. He often did what was equivalent to poohpoohing his conversation by not even appearing to listen, and by suddenly cutting it short with a query on a new subject. Jermyn was able and politic enough to have commanded a great deal of success in his life, but he could not help being handsome, arrogant, fond of being heard, indisposed to any kind of comradeship, amorous and bland towards women, cold and self-contained towards men. You will hear very strong denials that an attorney's being handsome could enter into the dislike he excited; but conversation consists a good deal in the denial of what is true. From the British point of view masculine beauty is regarded very much as it is in the drapery business: — as good solely for the fancy department — for young noblemen, artists, poets, and the clergy. Some one who, like Mr. Lingon, was disposed to revile Jermyn (perhaps it was Sir Maximus), had called him "a cursed, sleek, handsome, long-winded, overbearing sycophant;" epithets which expressed, rather confusedly, the mingled character of the dislike he excited. And serviceable John Johnson, himself sleek, and mindful about his broadcloth and his cambric fronts, had what he considered "spirit" enough within him to feel that dislike of Jermyn gradually gathering force through years of obligation and subjection, till it had become an actuating motive disposed to use an opportunity, if not to watch for one.

It was not this motive, however, but rather the ordinary course of business, which accounted for Johnson's playing a double part as an electioneering agent. What men do in elec-

tions is not to be classed either among sins or marks of grace: it would be profane to include business in religion, and conscience refers to failure, not to success. Still, the sense of being galled by Jermyn's harness was an additional reason for cultivating all relations that were independent of him; and pique at Harold Transome's behavior to him in Jermyn's office perhaps gave all the more zest to Johnson's use of his pen and ink when he wrote a handbill in the service of Garstin, and Garstin's incomparable agent, Putty, full of innuendoes against Harold Transome, as a descendant of the Durfey-Transomes. It is a natural subject of self-congratulation to a man, when special knowledge, gained long ago without any forecast, turns out to afford a special inspiration in the present; and Johnson felt a new pleasure in the consciousness that he of all people in the world next to Jermyn had the most intimate knowledge of the Transome affairs. Still better—some of these affairs were secrets of Jermyn's. If in an uncomplimentary spirit he might have been called Jermyn's "man of straw," it was a satisfaction to know that the unreality of the man John Johnson was confined to his appearance in annuity deeds, and that elsewhere he was solid, locomotive, and capable of remembering anything for his own pleasure and benefit. To act with doubleness towards a man whose own conduct was double, was so near an approach to virtue that it deserved to be called by no meaner name than Diplomacy.

By such causes it came to pass that Christian held in his hands a bill in which Jermyn was playfully alluded to as Mr. German Cozen, who won games by clever shuffling and odd tricks without any honor, and backed Durfey's crib against Bycliffe,—in which it was adroitly implied that the so-called head of the Transomes was only the tail of the Durfey's,—and that some said the Durfey's would have died out and left their nest empty if it had not been for their German Cozen.

Johnson had not dared to use any recollections except such as might credibly exist in other minds besides his own. In the truth of the case, no one but himself had the prompting to recall these outworn scandals; but it was likely enough that such foul-winged things should be revived by election heats for Johnson to escape all suspicion.

Christian could gather only dim and uncertain inferences from this flat irony and heavy joking; but one chief thing was clear to him. He had been right in his conjecture that Jermyn's interest about Bycliffe had its source in some claim

of Bycliffe's on the Transome property. And then, there was that story of the old bill-sticker's, which, closely considered, indicated that the right of the present Transomes depended, or at least had depended, on the continuance of some other lives. Christian in his time had gathered enough legal notions to be aware that possession by one man sometimes depended on the life of another; that a man might sell his own interest in property, and the interest of his descendants, while a claim on that property would still remain to some one else than the purchaser, supposing the descendants became extinct, and the interest they had sold were at an end. But under what conditions the claim might be valid or void in any particular case, was all darkness to him. Suppose Bycliffe had any such claim on the Transome estates: how was Christian to know whether at the present moment it was worth anything more than a bit of rotten parchment? Old Tommy Trounsein had said that Johnson knew all about it. But even if Johnson were still above-ground — and all Johnsons are mortal — he might still be an understrapper of Jermyn's, in which case his knowledge would be on the wrong side of the hedge for the purposes of Henry Scaddon. His immediate care must be to find out all he could about Johnson. He blamed himself for not having questioned Tommy further while he had him at command; but on this head the bill-sticker could hardly know more than the less dilapidated denizens of Treby.

Now it had happened that during the weeks in which Christian had been at work in trying to solve the enigma of Jermyn's interest about Bycliffe, Johnson's mind also had been somewhat occupied with suspicion and conjecture as to new information on the subject of the old Bycliffe claims which Jermyn intended to conceal from him. The letter which, after his interview with Christian, Jermyn had written with a sense of perfect safety to his faithful ally Johnson, was, as we know, written to a Johnson who had found his self-love incompatible with that faithfulness of which it was supposed to be the foundation. Anything that the patron felt it inconvenient for his obliged friend and servant to know, became by that very fact an object of peculiar curiosity. The obliged friend and servant secretly doated on his patron's inconvenience, provided that he himself did not share it; and conjecture naturally became active.

Johnson's legal imagination, being very differently furnished from Christian's, was at no loss to conceive conditions under which there might arise a new claim on the Transome estates.

He had before him the whole history of the settlement of those estates made a hundred years ago by John Justus Transome, entailing them, whilst in his possession, on his son Thomas and his heirs-male, with remainder to the Bycliffes in fee. He knew that Thomas, son of John Justus, proving a prodigal, had, without the knowledge of his father, the tenant in possession, sold his own and his descendants' right to a lawyer-cousin named Durfey; that, therefore, the title of the Durfey-Transomes, in spite of that old Durfey's tricks to show the contrary, depended solely on the purchase of the "base fee" thus created by Thomas Transome; and that the Bycliffes were the "remainder-men" who might fairly oust the Durfey-Transomes if ever the issue of the prodigal Thomas went clean out of existence, and ceased to represent a right which he had bargained away from them.

Johnson, as Jermyn's subordinate, had been closely cognizant of the details concerning the suit instituted by successive Bycliffes, of whom Maurice Christian Bycliffe was the last, on the plea that the extinction of Thomas Transome's line had actually come to pass—a weary suit, which had eaten into the fortunes of two families, and had only made the canker-worms fat. The suit had closed with the death of Maurice Christian Bycliffe in prison; but before his death, Jermyn's exertions to get evidence that there was still issue of Thomas Transome's line surviving, as a security of the Durfey title, had issued in the discovery of a Thomas Transome at Littleshaw, in Stonyshire, who was the representative of a pawned inheritance. The death of Maurice had made this discovery useless—had made it seem the wiser part to say nothing about it; and the fact had remained a secret known only to Jermyn and Johnson. No other Bycliffe was known or believed to exist, and the Durfey-Transomes might be considered safe, unless—yes, there was an "unless" which Johnson could conceive: an heir or heiress of the Bycliffes—if such a personage turned out to be in existence—might sometime raise a new and valid claim when once informed that wretched old Tommy Trounsem the bill-sticker, tottering drunkenly on the edge of the grave, was the last issue remaining above-ground from that dissolute Thomas who played his Esau part a century before. While the poor old bill-sticker breathed, the Durfey-Transomes could legally keep their possession in spite of a possible Bycliffe proved real; but not when the parish had buried the bill-sticker.

Still, it is one thing to conceive conditions, and another to see

any chance of proving their existence. Johnson at present had no glimpse of such a chance; and even if he ever gained the glimpse, he was not sure that he should ever make any use of it. His inquiries of Medwin, in obedience to Jermyn's letter, had extracted only a negative as to any information possessed by the lawyers of Bycliffe concerning a marriage, or expectation of offspring on his part. But Johnson felt not the less stung by curiosity to know what Jermyn had found out: that he had found something in relation to a possible Bycliffe, Johnson felt pretty sure. And he thought with satisfaction that Jermyn could not hinder him from knowing what he already knew about Thomas Transome's issue. Many things might occur to alter his policy and give a new value to facts. Was it certain that Jermyn would always be fortunate?

When greed and unscrupulousness exhibit themselves on a grand historical scale, and there is question of peace or war or amicable partition, it often occurs that gentlemen of high diplomatic talents have their minds bent on the same object from different points of view. Each, perhaps, is thinking of a certain duchy or province, with a view to arranging the ownership in such a way as shall best serve the purposes of the gentleman with high diplomatic talents in whom each is more especially interested. But these select minds in high office can never miss their aims from ignorance of each other's existence or whereabouts. Their high titles may be learned even by common people from every pocket almanac.

But with meaner diplomatists, who might be mutually useful, such ignorance is often obstructive. Mr. John Johnson and Mr. Christian, otherwise Henry Scaddon, might have had a concentration of purpose and an ingenuity of device fitting them to make a figure in the parcelling of Europe, and yet they might never have met, simply because Johnson knew nothing of Christian, and because Christian did not know where to find Johnson.

CHAPTER XXX.

His nature is too noble for the world:
He would not flatter Neptune for his trident,
Or Jove for his power to thunder. His heart's his mouth:
What his breast forges, that his tongue must vent;
And, being angry, doth forget that ever
He heard the name of death. — *Coriolanus*.

CHRISTIAN and Johnson did meet, however, by means that were quite incalculable. The incident which brought them into communication was due to Felix Holt, who of all men in the world had the least affinity either for the industrious or the idle parasite.

Mr. Lyon had urged Felix to go to Duffield on the 15th of December, to witness the nomination of the candidates for North Loamshire. The minister wished to hear what took place; and the pleasure of gratifying him helped to outweigh some opposing reasons.

"I shall get into a rage at something or other," Felix had said. "I've told you one of my weak points. Where I have any particular business, I must incur the risks my nature brings. But I've no particular business at Duffield. However, I'll make a holiday and go. By dint of seeing folly, I shall get lessons in patience."

The weak point to which Felix referred was his liability to be carried completely out of his own mastery by indignant anger. His strong health, his renunciation of selfish claims, his habitual preoccupation with large thoughts and with purposes independent of every-day casualties, secured him a fine and even temper, free from moodiness or irritability. He was full of long-suffering towards his unwise mother, who "pressed him daily with her words and urged him, so that his soul was vexed;" he had chosen to fill his days in a way that required the utmost exertion of patience, that required those little rill-like out-flowings of goodness which in minds of great energy must be fed from deep sources of thought and passionate devotedness. In this way his energies served to make him gentle; and now, in this twenty-sixth year of his life, they had ceased to make him angry, except in the presence of something that roused his deep indignation. When once exasperated, the passionateness of his nature threw off the yoke

of a long-trained consciousness in which thought and emotion had been more and more completely mingled, and concentrated itself in a rage as ungovernable as that of boyhood. He was thoroughly aware of the liability, and knew that in such circumstances he could not answer for himself. Sensitive people with feeble frames have often the same sort of fury within them; but they are themselves shattered, and shatter nothing. Felix had a terrible arm: he knew that he was dangerous; and he avoided the conditions that might cause him exasperation, as he would have avoided intoxicating drinks if he had been in danger of intemperance.

The nomination day was a great epoch of successful trickery, or, to speak in a more parliamentary manner, of war-stratagem, on the part of skilful agents. And Mr. Johnson had his share of inward chuckling and self-approval, as one who might justly expect increasing renown, and be some day in as general request as the great Putty himself. To have the pleasure and the praise of electioneering ingenuity, and also to get paid for it, without too much anxiety whether the ingenuity will achieve its ultimate end, perhaps gives to some select persons a sort of satisfaction in their superiority to their more agitated fellow-men that is worthy to be classed with those generous enjoyments of having the truth chiefly to yourself, and of seeing others in danger of drowning while you are high and dry, which seem to have been regarded as unmixed privileges by Lucretius and Lord Bacon.

One of Mr. Johnson's great successes was this. Spratt, the hated manager of the Sproxton Colliery, in careless confidence that the colliers and other laborers under him would follow his orders, had provided carts to carry some loads of voteless enthusiasm to Duffield on behalf of Garstin; enthusiasm which, being already paid for by the recognized benefit of Garstin's existence as a capitalist with a share in the Sproxton mines, was not to cost much in the form of treating. A capitalist was held worthy of pious honor as the cause why working men existed. But Mr. Spratt did not sufficiently consider that a cause which has to be proved by argument or testimony is not an object of passionate devotion to colliers: a visible cause of beer acts on them much more strongly. And even if there had been any love of the far-off Garstin, hatred of the too-immediate Spratt would have been the stronger motive. Hence Johnson's calculations, made long ago with Chubb, the remarkable publican, had been well

founded, and there had been diligent care to supply treating at Duffield in the name of Transome. After the election was over, it was not improbable that there would be much friendly joking between Putty and Johnson as to the success of this trick against Putty's employer, and Johnson would be conscious of rising in the opinion of his celebrated senior.

For the show of hands and the cheering, the hustling and the pelting, the roaring and the hissing, the hard hits with small missiles, and the soft hits with small jokes, were strong enough on the side of Transome to balance the similar "demonstrations" for Garstin, even with the Debarry interest in his favor. And the inconvenient presence of Spratt was early got rid of by a dexterously-managed accident, which sent him bruised and limping from the scene of action. Mr. Chubb had never before felt so thoroughly that the occasion was up to a level with his talents, while the clear daylight in which his virtue would appear when at the election he voted, as his duty to himself bound him, for Garstin only, gave him thorough repose of conscience.

Felix Holt was the only person looking on at the senseless exhibitions of this nomination day, who knew from the beginning the history of the trick with the Sproxtton men. He *had been aware all along that the treating at Chubb's* had been continued, and that so far Harold Transome's promise had produced no good fruits; and what he was observing to-day, as he watched the uproarious crowd, convinced him that the whole scheme would be carried out just as if he had never spoken about it. He could be fair enough to Transome to allow that he might have wished, and yet have been unable, with his notions of success, to keep his promise; and his bitterness towards the candidate only took the form of contemptuous pity; for Felix was not sparing in his contempt for men who put their inward honor in pawn by seeking the prizes of the world. His scorn fell too readily on the fortunate. But when he saw Johnson passing to and fro, and speaking to Jermyn on the hustings, he felt himself getting angry, and jumped off the wheel of the stationary cart on which he was mounted, that he might no longer be in sight of this man, whose vitiating cant had made his blood hot and his fingers tingle on the first day of encountering him at Sproxtton. It was a little too exasperating to look at this pink-faced rotund specimen of prosperity, to witness the power for evil that lay in his vulgar cant, backed by another man's money, and to know that such stupid iniquity flourished

the flags of Reform, and Liberalism, and justice to the needy. While the roaring and the scuffling were still going on, Felix, with his thick stick in his hand, made his way through the crowd, and walked on through the Duffield streets, till he came out on a grassy suburb, where the houses surrounded a small common. Here he walked about in the breezy air, and ate his bread and apples, telling himself that this angry haste of his about evils that could only be remedied slowly, could be nothing else than obstructive, and might some day — he saw it so clearly that the thought seemed like a presentiment — be obstructive of his own work.

“Not to waste energy, to apply force where it would tell, to do small work close at hand, not waiting for speculative chances of heroism, but preparing for them” — these were the rules he had been constantly urging on himself. But what could be a greater waste than to beat a scoundrel who had law and opodeldoc at command? After this meditation, Felix felt cool and wise enough to return into the town, not, however, intending to deny himself the satisfaction of a few pungent words wherever there was place for them. Blows are sarcasms turned stupid: wit is a form of force that leaves the limbs at rest.

Anything that could be called a crowd was no longer to be seen. The show of hands having been pronounced to be in favor of Debarry and Transome, and a poll having been demanded for Garstin, the business of the day might be considered at an end. But in the street where the hustings were erected, and where the great hotels stood, there were many groups, as well as strollers and steady walkers to and fro. Men in superior greatcoats and well-brushed hats were awaiting with more or less impatience an important dinner, either at the Crown, which was Debarry's house, or at the Three Cranes, which was Garstin's, or at the Fox and Hounds, which was Transome's. Knots of sober retailers, who had already dined, were to be seen at some shop-doors; men in very shabby coats and miscellaneous head-coverings, inhabitants of Duffield and not county voters, were lounging about in dull silence, or listening, some to a grimy man in a flannel shirt, hatless and with turbid red hair, who was insisting on political points with much more ease than had seemed to belong to the gentlemen speakers on the hustings, and others to a Scotch vender of articles useful to sell, whose unfamiliar accent seemed to have a guaranty of truth in it wanting as an association with every-day English. Some rough-looking

pipe-smokers, or distinguished cigar-smokers, chose to walk up and down in isolation and silence. But the majority of those who had shown a burning interest in the nomination had disappeared, and cockades no longer studded a close-packed crowd, like, and also very unlike, meadow-flowers among the grass. The street pavement was strangely painted with fragments of perishable missiles ground flat under heavy feet: but the workers were resting from their toil, and the buzz and tread and the fitfully discernible voices seemed like stillness to Felix after the roar with which the wide space had been filled when he left it.

The group round the speaker in the flannel shirt stood at the corner of a side-street, and the speaker himself was elevated by the head and shoulders above his hearers, not because he was tall, but because he stood on a projecting stone. At the opposite corner of the turning was the great inn of the Fox and Hounds, and this was the ultra-Liberal quarter of the High Street. Felix was at once attracted by this group; he liked the look of the speaker, whose bare arms were powerfully muscular, though he had the pallid complexion of a man who lives chiefly amidst the heat of furnaces. He was leaning against the dark stone building behind him with folded arms, the grimy paleness of his shirt and skin standing out in high relief against the dark stone building behind him. He lifted up one fore-finger, and marked his emphasis with it as he spoke. His voice was high and not strong, but Felix recognized the fluency and the method of a habitual preacher or lecturer.

"It's the fallacy of all monopolists," he was saying. "We know what monopolists are: men who want to keep a trade all to themselves, under the pretence that they'll furnish the public with a better article. We know what that comes to: in some countries a poor man can't afford to buy a spoonful of salt, and yet there's salt enough in the world to pickle every living thing in it. That's the sort of benefit monopolists do to mankind. And these are the men who tell us we're to let politics alone; they'll govern us better without our knowing anything about it. We must mind our business; we are ignorant; we've no time to study great questions. But I tell them this: the greatest question in the world is, how to give every man a man's share in what goes on in life—"

"Hear, hear!" said Felix in his sonorous voice, which seemed to give a new impressiveness to what the speaker had

said. Every one looked at him : the well-washed face and its educated expression along with a dress more careless than that of most well-to-do workmen on a holiday, made his appearance strangely arresting.

"Not a pig's share," the speaker went on, "not a horse's share, not the share of a machine fed with oil only to make it work and nothing else. It isn't a man's share just to mind your pin-making, or your glass-blowing, and higgie about your own wages, and bring up your family to be ignorant sons of ignorant fathers, and no better prospect; that's a slave's share; we want a freeman's share, and that is to think and speak and act about what concerns us all, and see whether these fine gentlemen who undertake to govern us are doing the best they can for us. They've got the knowledge, say they. Very well, we've got the wants. There's many a one would be idle if hunger didn't pinch him; but the stomach sets us to work. There's a fable told where the nobles are the belly and the people the members. But I make another sort of fable. I say, we are the belly that feels the pinches, and we'll set these aristocrats, these great people who call themselves our brains, to work at some way of satisfying us a bit better. The aristocrats are pretty sure to try and govern for their own benefit; but how are we to be sure they'll try and govern for ours? They must be looked after, I think, like other workmen. We must have what we call inspectors, to see whether the work's well done for us. We want to send our inspectors to Parliament. Well, they say—you've got the Reform Bill; what more can you want? Send your inspectors. But I say, the Reform Bill is a trick—it's nothing but swearing-in special constables to keep the aristocrats safe in their monopoly; it's bribing some of the people with votes to make them hold their tongues about giving votes to the rest. I say, if a man doesn't beg or steal, but works for his bread, the poorer and the more miserable he is, the more he'd need have a vote to send an inspector to Parliament—else the man who is worst off is likely to be forgotten; and I say, he's the man who ought to be first remembered. Else what does their religion mean? Why do they build churches and endow them that their sons may get paid well for preaching a Saviour, and making themselves as little like Him as can be? If I want to believe in Jesus Christ, I must shut my eyes for fear I should see a parson. And what's a bishop? A bishop's a parson dressed up, who sits in the House of Lords to help and throw out Reform Bills. And because it's

hard to get anything in the shape of a man to dress himself up like that, and do such work, they give him a palace for it, and plenty of thousands a-year. And then they cry out—'The Church is in danger,'—'the poor man's Church.' And why is it the poor man's Church? Because he can have a seat for nothing. I think it is for nothing; for it would be hard to tell what he gets by it. If the poor man had a vote in the matter, I think he'd choose a different sort of a Church to what that is. But do you think the aristocrats will ever alter it, if the belly doesn't pinch them? Not they. It's part of their monopoly. They'll supply us with our religion like everything else, and get a profit on it. They'll give us plenty of heaven. We may have land *there*. That's the sort of religion they like—a religion that gives us working men heaven, and nothing else. But we'll offer to change with 'em. We'll give them back some of their heaven, and take it out in something for us and our children in this world. They don't seem to care so much about heaven themselves till they feel the gout very bad; but you won't get them to give up anything else, if you don't pinch 'em for it. And to pinch them enough, we must get the suffrage, we must get votes, that we may send the men to Parliament who will do *our* work for us; and we must have Parliament dissolved *each* year, that we may change our man if he doesn't do what *we* want him to do; and we must have the country divided *so* that the little kings of the counties can't do as they *like*, but must be shaken up in one bag with us. I say, if *we* working men are ever to get a man's share, we must have universal suffrage, and annual Parliaments, and the vote by ballot, and electoral districts."

"No!—something else before all that," said Felix, again startling the audience into looking at him. But the speaker glanced coldly at him and went on.

"That's what Sir Francis Burdett went in for fifteen years ago; and it's the right thing for us, if it was Tomforescott went in for it. You must lay hold of such handles *who* to can. I don't believe much in liberal aristocrats; but if *with* any fine carved gold-headed stick of an aristocrat will *business* broomstick of himself, I'll lose no time but I'll *say* question him. And that's what I think about Transome. *The* world of you have acquaintance among county voters, it goes on hint that you wish 'em to vote for Transome."

At the last word, the speaker stepped down from *his* voice, *his* eminence, and walked away rapidly, like a man *who* speaker *had*

was exhausted, and who must go about his business. But he had left an appetite in his audience for further oratory, and one of them seemed to express a general sentiment as he turned immediately to Felix, and said, "Come, sir, what do you say?"

Felix did at once what he would very likely have done without being asked — he stepped on to the stone, and took off his cap by an instinctive prompting that always led him to speak uncovered. The effect of his figure in relief against the stone background was unlike that of the previous speaker. He was considerably taller, his head and neck were more massive, and the expression of his mouth and eyes were something very different from the mere acuteness and rather hard-lipped antagonism of the trades-union man. Felix Holt's face had the look of habitual meditative abstraction from objects of mere personal vanity or desire, which is the peculiar stamp of culture, and makes a very roughly-cut face worthy to be called "the human face divine." Even lions and dogs know a distinction between men's glances; and doubtless those Duffield men, in the expectation with which they looked up at Felix, were unconsciously influenced by the grandeur of his full yet firm mouth, and the calm clearness of his gray eyes, which were somehow unlike what they were accustomed to see along with an old brown velveteen coat, and an absence of chin-propping. When he began to speak, the contrast of voice was still stronger than that of appearance. The man in the flannel shirt had not been heard — had probably not cared to be heard — beyond the immediate group of listeners. But Felix at once drew the attention of persons comparatively at a distance.

"In my opinion," he said, almost the moment after he was addressed, "that was a true word spoken by your friend when he said the great question was how to give every man a man's share in life. But I think he expects voting to do more towards it than I do. I want the working men to have power. I'm a working man myself, and I don't want to be anything else. But there are two sorts of power. There's a power to do mischief — to undo what has been done with great expense and labor, to waste and destroy, to be cruel to the weak, to lie and quarrel, and to talk poisonous nonsense. That's the sort of power that ignorant numbers have. It never made a joint stool or planted a potato. Do you think it's likely to do much towards governing a great country, and making wise laws, and giving shelter, food, and clothes to millions of men?"

Ignorant power comes in the end to the same thing as wicked power; it makes misery. It's another sort of power that I want us working men to have, and I can see plainly enough that our all having votes will do little towards it at present. I hope we, or the children that come after us, will get plenty of political power some time. I tell everybody plainly, I hope there will be great changes, and that some time, whether we live to see it or not, men will have come to be ashamed of things they're proud of now. But I should like to convince you that votes would never give you political power worth having while things are as they are now, and that if you go the right way to work you may get power sooner without votes. Perhaps all you who hear me are sober men, who try to learn as much of the nature of things as you can, and to be as little like fools as possible. A fool or idiot is one who expects things to happen that never can happen; he pours milk into a can without a bottom, and expects the milk to stay there. The more of such vain expectations a man has, the more he is of a fool or idiot. And if any working man expects a vote to do for him what it never can do, he's foolish to that amount, if no more. I think that's clear enough, eh?"

"Hear, hear," said several voices, but they were not those of the original group; they belonged to some strollers who had been attracted by Felix Holt's vibrating voice, and were Tories from the Crown. Among them was Christian, who was smoking a cigar with a pleasure he always felt in being among people who did not know him, and doubtless took him to be something higher than he really was. Hearers from the Fox and Hounds also were slowly adding themselves to the nucleus. Felix, accessible to the pleasure of being listened to, went on with more and more animation:—

"The way to get rid of folly is to get rid of vain expectations and of thoughts that don't agree with the nature of things. The men who have had true thoughts about water, and know what it will do when it is turned into steam and under all sorts of circumstances, have made themselves a great power in the world; they are turning the wheels of engines that will help to change most things. But no engines would have done, if there had been false notions about the way water would act. Now, all the schemes about voting, and districts, and annual Parliaments and the rest, are engines, and the water or steam—the force that is to work them—must come out of human nature—out of men's passions, feelings, desires. Whether the engine

will do good work or bad depends on these feelings; and if we have false expectations about men's characters, we are very much like the idiot who thinks he'll carry milk in a can without a bottom. In my opinion, the notions about what mere voting will do are very much of that sort."

"That's very fine," said a man in dirty fustian, with a scornful laugh. "But how are we to get the power without votes?"

"I'll tell you what's the greatest power under heaven," said Felix, "and that is public opinion — the ruling belief in society about what is right and what is wrong, what is honorable and what is shameful. That's the steam that is to work the engines. How can political freedom make us better, any more than a religion we don't believe in, if people laugh and wink when they see men abuse and defile it? And while public opinion is what it is — while men have no better beliefs about public duty — while corruption is not felt to be a damning disgrace — while men are not ashamed in Parliament and out of it to make public questions which concern the welfare of millions a mere screen for their own petty private ends, — I say, no fresh scheme of voting will much mend our condition. For, take us working men of all sorts. Suppose out of every hundred who had a vote there were thirty who had some soberness, some sense to choose with, some good feeling to make them wish the right thing for all. And suppose there were seventy out of the hundred who were, half of them, not sober, who had no sense to choose one thing in politics more than another, and who had so little good feeling in them that they wasted on their own drinking the money that should have helped to feed and clothe their wives and children; and another half of them who, if they didn't drink, were too ignorant or mean or stupid to see any good for themselves better than pocketing a five-shilling piece when it was offered them. Where would be the political power of the thirty sober men? The power would lie with the seventy drunken and stupid votes; and I'll tell you what sort of men would get the power — what sort of men would end by returning whom they pleased to Parliament."

Felix had seen every face around him, and had particularly noticed a recent addition to his audience; but now he looked before him without appearing to fix his glance on any one. In spite of his cooling meditations an hour ago, his pulse was getting quickened by indignation, and the desire to crush what he hated was likely to vent itself in articulation. His tone became more biting.

"They would be men who would undertake to do the business for a candidate, and return him : men who have no real opinions, but who pilfer the words of every opinion, and turn them into a cant which will serve their purpose at the moment ; men who look out for dirty work to make their fortunes by, because dirty work wants little talent and no conscience ; men who know all the ins and outs of bribery, because there is not a cranny in their own souls where a bribe can't enter. Such men as these will be the masters wherever there's a majority of voters who care more for money, more for drink, more for some mean little end which is their own and nobody else's, than for anything that has ever been called Right in the world. For suppose there's a poor voter named Jack, who has seven children, and twelve or fifteen shillings a-week wages, perhaps less. Jack can't read—I don't say whose fault that is—he never had the chance to learn ; he knows so little that he perhaps thinks God made the poor-laws, and if anybody said the pattern of the workhouse was laid down in the Testament, he wouldn't be able to contradict them. What is poor Jack likely to do when he sees a smart stranger coming to him, who happens to be just one of those men that I say will be the masters till public opinion gets too hot for them ? He's a middle-sized man, we'll say ; stout, with coat upon coat of fine broad-cloth, open enough to show a fine gold chain : none of your dark, scowling men, but one with an innocent pink-and-white skin and very smooth light hair—a most respectable man, who calls himself by a good, sound, well-known English name—as Green, or Baker, or Wilson, or, let us say, Johnson—"

Felix was interrupted by an explosion of laughter from a majority of the bystanders. Some eyes had been turned on Johnson, who stood on the right hand of Felix, at the very beginning of the description, and these were gradually followed by others, till at last every hearer's attention was fixed on him, and the first burst of laughter from the two or three who knew the attorney's name, let every one sufficiently into the secret to make the amusement common. Johnson, who had kept his ground till his name was mentioned, now turned away, looking unusually white after being unusually red, and feeling by an attorney's instinct for his pocket-book, as if he felt it was a case for taking down the names of witnesses.

All the well-dressed hearers turned away too, thinking they had had the cream of the speech in the joke against Johnson, which, as a thing worth telling, helped to recall them to the scene of dinner.

"Who is this Johnson?" said Christian to a young man who had been standing near him, and had been one of the first to laugh. Christian's curiosity had naturally been awakened by what might prove a golden opportunity.

"Oh — a London attorney. He acts for Transome. That tremendous fellow at the corner there is some red-hot Radical demagogue, and Johnson has offended him, I suppose; else he wouldn't have turned in that way on a man of their own party."

"I had heard there was a Johnson who was an understrapper of Jermyn's," said Christian.

"Well, so this man may have been for what I know. But he's a London man now — a very busy fellow — on his own legs in Bedford Row. Ha ha! It's capital, though, when these Liberals get a slap in the face from the working men they're so very fond of."

Another turn along the street enabled Christian to come to a resolution. Having seen Jermyn drive away an hour before, he was in no fear: he walked at once to the Fox and Hounds and asked to speak to Mr. Johnson. A brief interview, in which Christian ascertained that he had before him the Johnson mentioned by the bill-sticker, issued in the appointment of a longer one at a later hour; and before they left Duffield they had come not exactly to a mutual understanding, but to an exchange of information mutually welcome.

Christian had been very cautious in the commencement, only intimating that he knew something important which some chance hints had induced him to think might be interesting to Mr. Johnson, but that this entirely depended on how far he had a common interest with Mr. Jermyn. Johnson replied that he had much business in which that gentleman was not concerned, but that to a certain extent they had a common interest. Probably then, Christian observed, the affairs of the Transome estate were part of the business in which Mr. Jermyn and Mr. Johnson might be understood to represent each other — in which case he need not detain Mr. Johnson? At this hint Johnson could not conceal that he was becoming eager. He had no idea what Christian's information was, but there were many grounds on which Johnson desired to know as much as he could about the Transome affairs independently of Jermyn. By little and little an understanding was arrived at. Christian told of his interview with Tommy Trounsem, and stated that if Johnson could show him whether the knowledge could have any legal

value, he could bring evidence that a legitimate child of Bycliffe's existed: he felt certain of his fact, and of his proof. Johnson explained, that in this case the death of the old bill-sticker would give the child the first valid claim to the Bycliffe heirship; that for his own part he should be glad to further a true claim, but that caution must be observed. How did Christian know that Jermyn was informed on this subject? Christian, more and more convinced that Johnson would be glad to counteract Jermyn, at length became explicit about Esther, but still withheld his own real name, and the nature of his relations with Bycliffe. He said he would bring the rest of his information when Mr. Johnson took the case up seriously, and place it in the hands of Bycliffe's old lawyers — of course he would do that? Johnson replied that he would certainly do that; but that there were legal niceties which Mr. Christian was probably not acquainted with; that Esther's claim had not yet accrued; and that hurry was useless.

The two men parted, each in distrust of the other, but each well pleased to have learned something. Johnson was not at all sure how he should act, but thought it likely that events would soon guide him. Christian was beginning to meditate a way of securing his own ends without depending in the least on Johnson's procedure. It was enough for him that he was now assured of Esther's legal claim on the Transome estates.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"In the copia of the factious language the word *Tory* was entertained, . . . and being a vocal clever-sounding word, readily pronounced, it kept its hold, and took possession of the foul mouths of the faction. . . . The *Loyalists* began to cheer up and to take heart of grace, and in the working of this crisis, according to the common laws of scolding, they considered which way to make payment for so much of *Tory* as they had been treated with, to clear scores. . . . Immediately the train took, and ran like wildfire and became general. And so the account of *Tory* was balanced, and soon began to run up a sharp score on the other side." — *NORTH'S Examen*, p. 321.

At last the great epoch of the election for North Loamshire had arrived. The roads approaching Treby were early traversed by a larger number of vehicles, horsemen, and also foot-passengers, than were ever seen there at the annual fair. Treby was the polling-place for many voters whose faces were quite strange in the town; and if there were some strangers who did not come to poll, though they had business not

unconnected with the election, they were not liable to be regarded with suspicion or especial curiosity. It was understood that no division of a county had ever been more thoroughly canvassed, and that there would be a hard run between Garstin and Transome. Mr. Johnson's headquarters were at Duffield; but it was a maxim which he repeated after the great Putty, that a capable agent makes himself omnipresent; and quite apart from the express between him and Jermyn, Mr. John Johnson's presence in the universe had potent effects on this December day at Treby Magna.

A slight drizzling rain which was observed by some Tories who looked out of their bedroom windows before six o'clock, made them hope that, after all, the day might pass off better than alarmists had expected. The rain was felt to be somehow on the side of quiet and Conservatism; but soon the breaking of the clouds and the mild gleams of a December sun brought back previous apprehensions. As there were already precedents for riot at a Reformed election, and as the Trebian district had had its confidence in the natural course of things somewhat shaken by a landed proprietor with an old name offering himself as a Radical candidate, the election had been looked forward to by many with a vague sense that it would be an occasion something like a fighting match, when bad characters would probably assemble, and there might be struggles and alarms for respectable men, which would make it expedient for them to take a little neat brandy as a precaution beforehand and a restorative afterwards. The tenants on the Transome estate were comparatively fearless: poor Mr. Goffe, of Rabbit's End, considered that "one thing was as mauling as another," and that an election was no worse than the sheep-rot; while Mr. Dibbs, taking the more cheerful view of a prosperous man, reflected that if the Radicals were dangerous, it was safer to be on their side. It was the voters for Debarry and Garstin who considered that they alone had the right to regard themselves as targets for evil-minded men; and Mr. Crowder, if he could have got his ideas countenanced, would have recommended a muster of farm-servants with defensive pitchforks on the side of Church and King. But the bolder men were rather gratified by the prospect of being groaned at, so that they might face about and groan in return.

Mr. Crow, the high constable of Treby, inwardly rehearsed a brief address to a riotous crowd in case it should be wanted, having been warned by the Rector that it was a primary duty

on these occasions to keep a watch against provocation as well as violence. The Rector, with a brother magistrate who was on the spot, had thought it desirable to swear in some special constables, but the presence of loyal men not absolutely required for the polling was not looked at in the light of a provocation. The Benefit Clubs from various quarters made a show, some with the orange-colored ribbons and streamers of the true Tory candidate, some with the mazarine of the Whig. The orange-colored bands played "Auld Langsyne," and a louder mazarine band came across them with "Oh whistle and I will come to thee, my lad" — probably as the tune the most symbolical of Liberalism which their repertory would furnish. There was not a single club bearing the Radical blue: the Sproxtton Club members wore the mazarine, and Mr. Chubb wore so much of it that he looked (at a sufficient distance) like a very large gentianella. It was generally understood that "these brave fellows," representing the fine institution of Benefit Clubs, and holding aloft the motto, "Let brotherly love continue," were a civil force calculated to encourage voters of sound opinions and keep up their spirits. But a considerable number of unadorned heavy navvies, colliers, and stone-pit men, who used their freedom as British subjects to be present in Treby on this great occasion, looked like a possibly uncivil force whose politics were dubious until it was clearly seen for whom they cheered and for whom they groaned.

Thus the way up to the polling-booths was variously lined, and those who walked it, to whatever side they belonged, had the advantage of hearing from the opposite side what were the most marked defects or excesses in their personal appearance; for the Trebians of that day held, without being aware that they had Cicero's authority for it, that the bodily blemishes of an opponent were a legitimate ground for ridicule; but if the voter frustrated wit by being handsome, he was groaned at and satirized according to a formula, in which the adjective was Tory, Whig, or Radical, as the case might be, and the substantive a blank to be filled up after the taste of the speaker.

Some of the more timid had chosen to go through this ordeal as early as possible in the morning. One of the earliest was Mr. Timothy Rose, the gentleman-farmer from Leek Malton. He had left home with some foreboding, having swathed his more vital parts in layers of flannel, and put on two greatcoats as a soft kind of armor. But reflecting with

some trepidation that there were no resources for protecting his head, he once more wavered in his intention to vote; he once more observed to Mrs. Rose that these were hard times when a man of independent property was expected to vote "willy-nilly;" but finally, coerced by the sense that he should be looked ill on "in these times" if he did not stand by the gentlemen round about, he set out in his gig, taking with him a powerful wagoner, whom he ordered to keep him in sight as he went to the polling-booth. It was hardly more than nine o'clock when Mr. Rose, having thus come up to the level of his times, cheered himself with a little cherry-brandy at the Marquis, drove away in a much more courageous spirit, and got down at Mr. Nolan's, just outside the town. The retired Londoner, he considered, was a man of experience, who would estimate properly the judicious course he had taken, and could make it known to others. Mr. Nolan was superintending the removal of some shrubs in his garden.

"Well, Mr. Nolan," said Rose, twinkling a self-complacent look over the red prominence of his cheeks, "have you been to give your vote yet?"

"No; all in good time. I shall go presently."

"Well, I wouldn't lose an hour, I wouldn't. I said to myself, if I've got to do gentlemen a favor, I'll do it at once. You see, I've got no landlord, Nolan—I'm in that position o' life that I can be independent."

"Just so, my dear sir," said the wiry-faced Nolan, pinching his under-lip between his thumb and finger, and giving one of those wonderful universal shrugs, by which he seemed to be recalling all his garments from a tendency to disperse themselves. "Come in and see Mrs. Nolan?"

"No, no, thankye. Mrs. Rose expects me back. But, as I was saying, I'm an independent man, and I consider it's not my part to show favor to one more than another, but to make things as even as I can. If I'd been a tenant to anybody, well, in course I must have voted for my landlord—that stands to sense. But I wish everybody well; and if one's returned to Parliament more than another, nobody can say it's my doing; for when you can vote for two, you can make things even. So I gave one to Debarry and one to Transome; and I wish Garstin no ill, but I can't help the odd number, and he hangs on to Debarry, they say."

"God bless me, sir," said Mr. Nolan, coughing down a laugh, "don't you perceive that you might as well have stayed at home and not voted at all, unless you would rather send a Radical to Parliament than a cocked Whig?"

"Well, I'm sorry you should have anything to say against what I've done, Nolan," said Mr. Rose, rather crestfallen, though sustained by inward warmth. "I thought you'd agree with me, as you're a sensible man. But the most a independent man can do is to try and please all; and if he hasn't the luck — here's wishing I may do it another time," added Mr. Rose, apparently confounding a toast with a salutation, for he put out his hand for a passing shake, and then stepped into his gig again.

At the time that Mr. Timothy Rose left the town, the crowd in King Street and in the market-place, where the polling-booths stood, was fluctuating. Voters as yet were scanty, and brave fellows who had come from any distance this morning, or who had sat up late drinking the night before, required some reinforcement of their strength and spirits. Every public-house in Treby, not excepting the venerable and sombre Cross-Keys, was lively with changing and numerous company. Not, of course, that there was any treating: treating necessarily had stopped, from moral scruples, when once "the writs were out;" but there was drinking, which did equally well under any name.

Poor Tommy Trounsem, breakfasting here on Falstaff's proposition of bread, and something which, for gentility's sake, I will call sack, was more than usually victorious over the ills of life, and felt himself one of the heroes of the day. He had an immense light-blue cockade in his hat, and an amount of silver in a dirty little canvas bag which astonished himself. For some reason, at first inscrutable to him, he had been paid for his bill-sticking with great liberality at Mr. Jermyn's office, in spite of his having been the victim of a trick by which he had once lost his own bills and pasted up Debarry's; but he soon saw that this was simply a recognition of his merit as "an old family kept out of its rights," and also of his peculiar share in an occasion when the family was to get into Parliament. Under these circumstances, it was due from him that he should show himself prominently where business was going forward, and give additional value by his presence to every vote for Transome. With this view he got a half-pint bottle filled with his peculiar kind of "sack," and hastened back to the market-place, feeling good-natured and patronizing towards all political parties, and only so far partial as his family bound him to be.

But a disposition to concentrate at that extremity of King Street which issued in the market-place was not universal

among the increasing crowd. Some of them seemed attracted towards another nucleus at the other extremity of King Street, near the Seven Stars. This was Garstin's chief house, where his committee sat, and it was also a point which must necessarily be passed by many voters entering the town on the eastern side. It seemed natural that the mazarine colors should be visible here, and that Pack, the tall "shepherd" of the Sproxton men, should be seen moving to and fro where there would be a frequent opportunity of cheering the voters for a gentleman who had the chief share in the Sproxton mines. But the side lanes and entries out of King Street were numerous enough to relieve any pressure if there was need to make way. The lanes had a distinguished reputation. Two of them had odors of brewing; one had a side entrance to Mr. Tiliot's wine and spirit vaults; up another Mr. Muscat's cheeses were frequently being unloaded; and even some of the entries had those cheerful suggestions of plentiful provision which were among the characteristics of Treby.

Between ten and eleven the voters came in more rapid succession, and the whole scene became spirited. Cheers, sarcasms, and oaths, which seemed to have a flavor of wit for many hearers, were beginning to be reinforced by more practical demonstrations, dubiously jocose. There was a disposition in the crowd to close and hem in the way for voters, either going or coming, until they had paid some kind of toll. It was difficult to see who set the example in the transition from words to deeds. Some thought it was due to Jacob Cuff, a Tory charity-man, who was a well-known ornament of the pothouse, and gave his mind much leisure for amusing devices; but questions of origination in stirring periods are notoriously hard to settle. It is by no means necessary in human things that there should be only one beginner. This, however, is certain — that Mr. Chubb, who wished it to be noticed that he voted for Garstin solely, was one of the first to get rather more notice than he wished, and that he had his hat knocked off and crushed in the interest of Debarry by Tories opposed to coalition. On the other hand, some said it was at the same time that Mr. Pink, the saddler, being stopped on his way and made to declare that he was going to vote for Debarry, got himself well chalked as to his coat, and pushed up an entry, where he remained the prisoner of terror combined with the want of any back outlet, and never gave his vote that day.

The second Tory joke was performed with much gusto.

The majority of the Transome tenants came in a body from the Ram Inn, with Mr. Banks the bailiff leading them. Poor Goffe was the last of them, and his worn melancholy look and forward-leaning gait gave the jocose Cuff the notion that the farmer was not what he called "*compus*." Mr. Goffe was cut off from his companions and hemmed in; asked, by voices with hot breath close to his ear, how many horses he had, how many cows, how many fat pigs; then jostled from one to another, who made trumpets with their hands, and deafened him by telling him to vote for Debarry. In this way the melancholy Goffe was hustled on till he was at the polling-booth—filled with confused alarms, the immediate alarm being that of having to go back in still worse fashion than he had come. Arriving in this way after the other tenants had left, he astonished all hearers who knew him for a tenant of the Transomes by saying "Debarry," and was jostled back trembling amid shouts of laughter.

By stages of this kind the fun grew faster, and was in danger of getting rather serious. The Tories began to feel that their jokes were returned by others of a heavier sort, and that the main strength of the crowd was not on the side of sound opinion, but might come to be on the side of sound cudgelling and kicking. The navvies and pitmen in dishabille seemed to be multiplying, and to be clearly not belonging to the party of Order. The shops were freely resorted to for various forms of playful missiles and weapons; and news came to the magistrates, watching from the large window of the Marquis, that a gentleman coming in on horseback at the other end of the street to vote for Garstin had had his horse turned round and frightened into a headlong gallop out of it again.

Mr. Crow and his subordinates, and all the special constables, felt that it was necessary to make some energetic effort, or else every voter would be intimidated and the poll must be adjourned. The Rector determined to get on horseback and go amidst the crowd with the constables; and he sent a message to Mr. Lingon, who was at the Ram, calling on him to do the same. "*Sporting Jack*" was sure the good fellows meant no harm, but he was courageous enough to face any bodily dangers, and rode out in his brown leggings and colored bandanna, speaking persuasively.

It was nearly twelve o'clock when this sally was made: the constables and magistrates tried the most pacific measures, and they seemed to succeed. There was a rapid thinning of

the crowd: the most boisterous disappeared, or seemed to do so by becoming quiet; missiles ceased to fly, and a sufficient way was cleared for voters along King Street. The magistrates returned to their quarters, and the constables took convenient posts of observation. Mr. Wace, who was one of Debarry's committee, had suggested to the Rector that it might be wise to send for the military from Duffield, with orders that they should station themselves at Hathercote, three miles off: there was so much property in the town that it would be better to make it secure against risks. But the Rector felt that this was not the part of a moderate and wise magistrate, unless the signs of riot recurred. He was a brave man, and fond of thinking that his own authority sufficed for the maintenance of the general good in Treby.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Go from me. Yet I feel that I shall stand
Henceforward in thy shadow. Never more
Alone upon the threshold of my door
Of individual life, I shall command
The uses of my soul, nor lift my hand
Serenely in the sunshine as before
Without the sense of that which I forbore --
Thy touch upon the palm. The widest land
Doom takes to part us, leaves thy heart in mine
With pulses that beat double. What I do
And what I dream include thee, as the wine
Must taste of its own grapes. And when I sue
God for myself, He hears that name of thine,
And sees within my eyes the tears of two.

MRS. BROWNING.

FELIX HOLT, seated at his work without his pupils, who had asked for a holiday with a notion that the wooden booths promised some sort of show, noticed about eleven o'clock that the noises which reached him from the main street were getting more and more tumultuous. He had long seen bad auguries for this election, but, like all people who dread the prophetic wisdom that ends in desiring the fulfilment of its own evil forebodings, he had checked himself with remembering that, though many conditions were possible which might bring on violence, there were just as many which might avert it. There would, perhaps, be no other mischief than what he was already certain of. With these thoughts he had sat down quietly to his work, meaning not to vex his soul by going to look on at things he would fain have made different

if he could. But he was of a fibre that vibrated too strongly to the life around him to shut himself away in quiet, even from suffering and irremediable wrong. As the noises grew louder, and wrought more and more strongly on his imagination, he was obliged to lay down his delicate wheel-work. His mother came from her turnip-paring in the kitchen, where little Job was her companion, to observe that they must be killing everybody in the High Street, and that the election, which had never been before at Treby, must have come for a judgment; that there were mercies where you didn't look for them, and that she thanked God in His wisdom for making her live up a back street.

Felix snatched his cap and rushed out. But when he got to the turning into the market-place the magistrates were already on horseback there, the constables were moving about, and Felix observed that there was no strong spirit of resistance to them. He stayed long enough to see the partial dispersion of the crowd and the restoration of tolerable quiet, and then went back to Mrs. Holt to tell her that there was nothing to fear now; he was going out again, and she must not be in any anxiety at his absence. She might set by his dinner for him.

Felix had been thinking of Esther and her probable alarm at the noises that must have reached her more distinctly than they had reached him, for Malthouse Yard was removed but a little way from the main street. Mr. Lyon was away from home, having been called to preach charity sermons and attend meetings in a distant town; and Esther, with the plaintive Lyddy for her sole companion, was not cheerfully circumstanced. Felix had not been to see her yet since her father's departure, but to-day he gave way to new reasons.

"Miss Esther was in the garret," Lyddy said, trying to see what was going on. But before she was fetched she came running down the stairs, drawn by the knock at the door, which had shaken the small dwelling.

"I am so thankful to see you," she said, eagerly. "Pray come in."

When she had shut the parlor door behind them, Felix said, "I suspected that you might have been made anxious by the noises. I came to tell you that things are quiet now. Though, indeed, you can hear that they are."

"I *was* frightened," said Esther. "The shouting and roaring of rude men is so hideous. It is a relief to me that my father is not at home — that he is out of the reach of any

danger he might have fallen into if he had been here. But I gave you credit for being in the midst of the danger," she added, smiling, with a determination not to show much feeling. "Sit down and tell me what has happened."

They sat down at the extremities of the old black sofa, and Felix said, —

"To tell you the truth, I had shut myself up, and tried to be as indifferent to the election as if I'd been one of the fishes in the Lapp, till the noises got too strong for me. But I only saw the tail end of the disturbance. The poor noisy simpletons seemed to give way before the magistrates and the constables. I hope nobody has been much hurt. The fear is that they may turn out again by-and-by; their giving way so soon may not be altogether a good sign. There's a great number of heavy fellows in the town. If they go and drink more, the last end may be worse than the first. However —"

Felix broke off, as if this talk were futile, clasped his hands behind his head, and, leaning backward, looked at Esther, who was looking at him.

"May I stay here a little while?" he said, after a moment, which seemed long.

"Pray do," said Esther, coloring. To relieve herself she took some work and bowed her head over her stitching. It was in reality a little heaven to her that Felix was there, but she saw beyond it — saw that by-and-by he would be gone, and that they should be farther on their way, not towards meeting, but parting. His will was impregnable. He was a rock, and she was no more to him than the white clinging mist-cloud.

"I wish I could be sure that you see things just as I do," he said, abruptly, after a minute's silence.

"I am sure you see them much more wisely than I do," said Esther, almost bitterly, without looking up.

"There are some people one must wish to judge one truly. Not to wish it would be mere hardness. I know you think I am a man without feeling — at least, without strong affections. You think I love nothing but my own resolutions."

"Suppose I reply in the same sort of strain?" said Esther, with a little toss of the head.

"How?"

"Why, that you think me a shallow woman, incapable of believing what is best in you, setting down everything that is too high for me as a deficiency."

"Don't parry what I say. Answer me." There was an

expression of painful beseeching in the tone with which Felix said this. Esther let her work fall on her lap and looked at him, but she was unable to speak.

"I want you to tell me — once — that you know it would be easier to me to give myself up to loving and being loved, as other men do, when they can, than to —"

This breaking-off in speech was something quite new in Felix. For the first time he had lost his self-possession, and turned his eyes away. He was at variance with himself. He had begun what he felt that he ought not to finish.

Esther, like a woman as she was — a woman waiting for love, never able to ask for it — had her joy in these signs of her power; but they made her generous, not chary, as they might have done if she had had a pettier disposition. She said, with deep yet timid earnestness, —

"What you have chosen to do has only convinced me that your love would be the better worth having."

All the finest part of Esther's nature trembled in those words. To be right in great memorable moments, is perhaps the thing we need most desire for ourselves.

Felix as quick as lightning turned his look upon her again, and, leaning forward, took her sweet hand and held it to his lips some moments before he let it fall again and raised his head.

"We shall always be the better for thinking of each other," he said, leaning his elbow on the back of the sofa, and supporting his head as he looked at her with calm sadness. "This thing can never come to me twice over. It is my knighthood. That was always a business of great cost."

He smiled at her, but she sat biting her inner lip, and pressing her hands together. She desired to be worthy of what she revered in Felix, but the inevitable renunciation was too difficult. She saw herself wandering through the future weak and forsaken. The charming sauciness was all gone from her face, but the memory of it made this childlike dependent sorrow all the more touching.

"Tell me what you would —" Felix burst out, leaning nearer to her; but the next instant he started up, went to the table, took his cap in his hand, and came in front of her.

"Good-by," he said, very gently, not daring to put out his hand. But Esther put up hers instead of speaking. He just pressed it and then went away.

She heard the doors close behind him, and felt free to be miserable. She cried bitterly. If she might have married

Felix Holt, she could have been a good woman. She felt no trust that she could ever be good without him.

Felix reproached himself. He would have done better not to speak in that way. But the prompting to which he had chiefly listened had been the desire to prove to Esther that he set a high value on her feelings. He could not help seeing that he was very important to her; and he was too simple and sincere a man to ape a sort of humility which would not have made him any the better if he had possessed it. Such pretences turn our lives into sorry dramas. And Felix wished Esther to know that her love was dear to him as the beloved dead are dear. He felt that they must not marry — that they would ruin each other's lives. But he had longed for her to know fully that his will to be always apart from her was renunciation, not an easy preference. In this he was thoroughly generous; and yet, now some subtle, mysterious conjuncture of impressions and circumstances had made him speak, he questioned the wisdom of what he had done. Express confessions give definiteness to memories that might more easily melt away without them; and Felix felt for Esther's pain as the strong soldier, who can march on hungering without fear that he shall faint, feels for the young brother — the maiden-cheeked conscript whose load is too heavy for him.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Mischief, thou art afoot.

Julius Caesar.

FELIX could not go home again immediately after quitting Esther. He got out of the town, skirted it a little while, looking across the December stillness of the fields, and then re-entered it by the main road into the market-place, thinking that, after all, it would be better for him to look at the busy doings of men than to listen in solitude to the voices within him; and he wished to know how things were going on.

It was now nearly half-past one, and Felix perceived that the street was filling with more than the previous crowd. By the time he got in front of the booths, he was himself so surrounded by men who were being thrust hither and thither that retreat would have been impossible; and he went where he was obliged to go, although his height and strength were

above the average even in a crowd where there were so many heavy-armed workmen used to the pickaxe. Almost all shabby-coated Trebians must have been there, but the entries and back streets of the town did not supply the mass of the crowd; and besides the rural incomers, both of the more decent and the rougher sort, Felix, as he was pushed along, thought he discerned here and there men of that keener aspect which is only common in manufacturing towns.

But at present there was no evidence of any distinctly mischievous design. There was only evidence that the majority of the crowd were excited with drink, and that their action could hardly be calculated on more than those of oxen and pigs congregated amidst hootings and pushings. The confused deafening shouts, the incidental fighting, the knocking over, pulling and scuffling, seemed to increase every moment. Such of the constables as were mixed with the crowd were quite helpless; and if an official staff was seen above the heads, it moved about fitfully, showing as little sign of a guiding hand as the summit of a buoy on the waves. Doubtless many hurts and bruises had been received, but no one could know the amount of injuries that were widely scattered.

It was clear that no more voting could be done, and the poll had been adjourned. The probabilities of serious mischief had grown strong enough to prevail over the Rector's objection to getting military aid within reach; and when Felix re-entered the town, a galloping messenger had already been despatched to Duffield. The Rector wished to ride out again, and read the Riot Act from a point where he could be better heard than from the window of the Marquis; but Mr. Crow, the high constable, who had returned from closer observation, insisted that the risk would be too great. New special constables had been sworn in, but Mr. Crow said prophetically that if once mischief began, the mob was past caring for constables.

But the Rector's voice was ringing and penetrating, and when he appeared on the narrow balcony and read the formula, commanding all men to go to their homes or about their lawful business, there was a strong transient effect. Every one within hearing listened, and for a few moments after the final words, "God save the King!" the comparative silence continued. Then the people began to move, the buzz rose again, and grew, and grew, till it turned to shouts and roaring as before. The movement was that of a flood hemmed in; it carried nobody away. Whether the crowd would obey the

order to disperse themselves within an hour, was a doubt that approached nearer to a negative certainty.

Presently Mr. Crow, who held himself a tactician, took a well-intentioned step, which went far to fulfil his own prophecy. He had arrived with the magistrates by a back way at the Seven Stars, and here again the Riot Act was read from a window, with much the same result as before. The Rector had returned by the same way to the Marquis, as the headquarters most suited for administration, but Mr. Crow remained at the other extremity of King Street, where some awe-striking presence was certainly needed. Seeing that the time was passing, and all effect from the voice of law had disappeared, he showed himself at an upper window, and addressed the crowd, telling them that the soldiers had been sent for, and that if they did not disperse they would have cavalry upon them instead of constables.

Mr. Crow, like some other high constables more celebrated in history, "enjoyed a bad reputation;" that is to say, he enjoyed many things which caused his reputation to be bad, and he was anything but popular in Treby. It is probable that a pleasant message would have lost something from his lips, and what he actually said was so unpleasant, that, instead of persuading the crowd, it appeared to enrage them. Some one, snatching a raw potato from a sack in the greengrocer's shop behind him, threw it at the constable and hit him on the mouth. Straightway raw potatoes and turnips were flying by twenties at the windows of the Seven Stars, and the panes were smashed. Felix, who was half-way up the street, heard the voices turning to a savage roar, and saw a rush towards the hardware shop, which furnished more effective weapons and missiles than turnips and potatoes. Then a cry ran along that the Tories had sent for the soldiers, and if those among the mob who called themselves Tories as willingly as anything else were disposed to take whatever called itself the Tory side, they only helped the main result of reckless disorder.

But there were proofs that the predominant will of the crowd was against "Debarry's men," and in favor of Transome. Several shops were invaded, and they were all of them "Tory shops." The tradesmen who could do so, now looked their doors and barricaded their windows within. There was a panic among the householders of this hitherto peaceful town, and a general anxiety for the military to arrive. The Rector was in painful anxiety on this head: he had sent out two messengers as secretly as he could towards Hathercote, to

order the soldiers to ride straight to the town; but he feared that these messengers had been somehow intercepted.

It was three o'clock: more than an hour had elapsed since the reading of the Riot Act. The Rector of Treby Magna wrote an indignant message and sent it to the Ram, to Mr. Lingon, the Rector of Little Treby, saying that there was evidently a Radical animus in the mob, and that Mr. Transome's party should hold themselves peculiarly responsible. Where was Mr. Jermyn?

Mr. Lingon replied that he was going himself out towards Duffield to see after the soldiers. As for Jermyn, he was not that attorney's sponsor: he believed that Jermyn was gone away somewhere on business — to fetch voters.

A serious effort was now being made by all the civil force at command. The December day would soon be passing into evening, and all disorder would be aggravated by obscurity. The horrors of fire were as likely to happen as any minor evil. The constables, as many of them as could do so, armed themselves with carbines and sabres: all the respectable inhabitants who had any courage, prepared themselves to struggle for order; and many felt with Mr. Wace and Mr. Tiliot that the nearest duty was to defend the breweries and the spirit and wine vaults, where the property was of a sort at once most likely to be threatened and most dangerous in its effects. The Rector, with fine determination, got on horseback again, as the best mode of leading the constables, who could only act efficiently in a close body. By his direction the column of armed men avoided the main street, and made their way along a back road, that they might occupy the two chief lanes leading to the wine-vaults and the brewery, and bear down on the crowd from these openings, which it was especially desirable to guard.

Meanwhile Felix Holt had been hotly occupied in King Street. After the first window-smashing at the Seven Stars, there was a sufficient reason for damaging that inn to the utmost. The destructive spirit tends towards completeness; and any object once maimed or otherwise injured, is as readily doomed by unreasoning men as by unreasoning boys. Also the Seven Stars sheltered Spratt; and to some Sproxton men in front of that inn it was exasperating that Spratt should be safe and sound on a day when blows were going, and justice might be rendered. And again, there was the general desirableness of being inside a public-house.

Felix had at last been willingly urged on to this spot.

Hitherto swayed by the crowd, he had been able to do nothing but defend himself and keep on his legs; but he foresaw that the people would burst into the inn; he heard cries of "Spratt!" "Fetch him out!" "We'll pitch him out!" "Pommel him!" It was not unlikely that lives might be sacrificed; and it was intolerable to Felix to be witnessing the blind outrages of this mad crowd, and yet be doing nothing to counteract them. Even some vain effort would satisfy him better than mere gazing. Within the walls of the inn he might have some one. He went in with a miscellaneous set, who dispersed themselves with different objects — some to the tap-room, and to search for the cellar; some up-stairs to search in all rooms for Spratt, or any one else, perhaps, as a temporary scapegoat for Spratt. Guided by the screams of women, Felix at last got to a high up-stairs passage, where the landlady and some of her servants were running away in helpless terror from two or three half-tipsy men, who had been emptying a spirit-decanter in the bar. Assuming the tone of a mob-leader, he cried out, "Here, boys, here's better fun this way — come with me!" and drew the men back with him along the passage. They reached the lower staircase in time to see the unhappy Spratt being dragged, coatless and screaming, down the steps. No one at present was striking or kicking him; it seemed as if he were being reserved for punishment on some wider area, where the satisfaction might be more generally shared. Felix followed close, determined, if he could, to rescue both assailers and assaulted from the worst consequences. His mind was busy with possible devices.

Down the stairs, out along the stones through the gateway, Spratt was dragged as a mere heap of linen and cloth rags. When he was got outside the gateway, there was an immense hooting and roaring, though many there had no grudge against him, and only guessed that others had the grudge. But this was the narrower part of the street; it widened as it went onwards, and Spratt was dragged on, his enemies crying, "We'll make a ring — we'll see how frightened he looks!"

"Kick him, and have done with him," Felix heard another say. "Let's go to Tiliot's vaults — there's more gin there!"

Here were two hideous threats. In dragging Spratt onward the people were getting very near to the lane leading up to Tiliot's. Felix kept as close as he could to the threatened victim. He had thrown away his own stick, and carried a bludgeon which had escaped from the hands of an invader at

the Seven Stars; his head was bare; he looked, to undiscerning eyes, like a leading spirit of the mob. In this condition he was observed by several persons looking anxiously from their upper windows, and finally observed to push himself, by violent efforts, close behind the dragged man.

Meanwhile the foremost among the constables, who, coming by the back way, had now reached the opening of Tiliot's Lane, discerned that the crowd had a victim amongst them. One spirited fellow, named Tucker, who was a regular constable, feeling that no time was to be lost in meditation, called on his neighbor to follow him, and with the sabre that had happened to be his weapon got a way for himself where he was not expected, by dint of quick resolution. At this moment Spratt had been let go—had been dropped, in fact, almost lifeless with terror, on the street stones, and the men round him had retreated for a little space, as if to amuse themselves with looking at him. Felix had taken his opportunity; and seeing the first step towards a plan he was bent on, he sprang forward close to the cowering Spratt. As he did this, Tucker had cut his way to the spot, and imagining Felix to be the destined executioner of Spratt—for any discrimination of Tucker's lay in his muscles rather than his eyes—he rushed up to Felix, meaning to collar him and throw him down. But Felix had rapid senses and quick thoughts; he discerned the situation; he chose between two evils. Quick as lightning he frustrated the constable, fell upon him, and tried to master his weapon. In the struggle, which was watched without interference, the constable fell undermost, and Felix got his weapon. He started up with the bare sabre in his hand. The crowd round him cried "Hurray!" with a sense that he was on their side against the constable. Tucker did not rise immediately; but Felix did not imagine that he was much hurt.

"Don't touch him!" said Felix. "Let him go. Here, bring Spratt, and follow me."

Felix was perfectly conscious that he was in the midst of a tangled business. But he had chiefly before his imagination the horrors that might come if the mass of wild chaotic desires and impulses around him were not diverted from any further attack on places where they would get in the midst of intoxicating and inflammable materials. It was not a moment in which a spirit like his could calculate the effect of misunderstanding as to himself: nature never makes men who are at once energetically sympathetic and minutely cal-

culating. He believed he had the power, and he was resolved to try, to carry the dangerous mass out of mischief till the military came to awe them — which he supposed, from Mr. Crow's announcement long ago, must be a near event.

He was followed the more willingly, because Tiliot's lane was seen by the hindmost to be now defended by constables, some of whom had firearms; and where there is no strong counter-movement, any proposition to do something unspecified stimulates stupid curiosity. To many of the Sproxton men who were within sight of him, Felix was known personally, and vaguely believed to be a man who meant many queer things, not at all of an every-day kind. Pressing along like a leader, with the sabre in his hand, and inviting them to bring on Spratt, there seemed a better reason for following him than for doing anything else. A man with a definite will and an energetic personality acts as a sort of flag to draw and bind together the foolish units of a mob. It was on this sort of influence over men whose mental state was a mere medley of appetites and confused impressions, that Felix had dared to count. He hurried them along with words of invitation, telling them to hold up Spratt and not drag him; and those behind followed him, with a growing belief that he had some *design worth knowing, while those in front were urged along* partly by the same notion, partly by the sense that there was a motive in those behind them, not knowing what the motive was. It was that mixture of pushing forward and being pushed forward, which is a brief history of most human things.

What Felix really intended to do, was to get the crowd by the nearest way out of the town, and induce them to skirt it on the north side with him, keeping up in them the idea that he was leading them to execute some stratagem by which they would surprise something worth attacking, and circumvent the constables who were defending the lanes. In the mean time he trusted that the soldiers would have arrived, and with this sort of mob, which was animated by no real political passion or fury against social distinctions, it was in the highest degree unlikely that there would be any resistance to a military force. The presence of fifty soldiers would probably be enough to scatter the rioting hundreds. How numerous the mob was, no one ever knew: many inhabitants afterwards were ready to swear that there must have been at least two thousand rioters. Felix knew he was incurring great risks; but "his blood was up:" we hardly allow enough in common life for the results of that enkindled passionate

enthusiasm which, under other conditions, makes world-famous deeds.

He was making for a point where the street branched off on one side towards a speedy opening between hedgerows, on the other towards the shabby wideness of Pollard's End. At this forking of the street there was a large space, in the centre of which there was a small stone platform, mounting by three steps, with an old green finger-post upon it. Felix went straight to this platform and stepped upon it, crying "Halt!" in a loud voice to the men behind and before him, and calling to those who held Spratt to bring him there. All came to a stand with faces towards the finger-post, and perhaps for the first time the extremities of the crowd got a definite idea that a man with a sabre in his hand was taking the command.

"Now!" said Felix, when Spratt had been brought on to the stone platform, faint and trembling, "has anybody got cord? if not, handkerchiefs knotted fast; give them to me."

He drew out his own handkerchief, and two or three others were mustered and handed to him. He ordered them to be knotted together, while curious eyes were fixed on him. Was he going to have Spratt hanged? Felix kept fast hold of his weapon, and ordered others to act.

"Now, put it round his waist, wind his arms in, draw them a little backward — so! and tie it fast on the other side of the post."

When that was done, Felix said, imperatively, —

"Leave him there — we shall come back to him; let us make haste; march along, lads! Up Park Street and down Hobb's Lane."

It was the best chance he could think of for saving Spratt's life. And he succeeded. The pleasure of seeing the helpless man tied up sufficed for the moment, if there were any who had ferocity enough to count much on coming back to him. Nobody's imagination represented the certainty that some one out of the houses at hand would soon come and untie him when he was left alone.

And the rioters pushed up Park Street, a noisy stream, with Felix still in the midst of them, though he was laboring hard to get his way to the front. He wished to determine the course of the crowd along a by-road called Hobb's Lane, which would have taken them to the other — the Duffield end of the town. He urged several of the men round him, one of whom was no less a person than the big Dredge, our old Sproxtton acquaintance, to get forward, and be sure that all the fellows

would go down the lane, else they would spoil sport. Hitherto Felix had been successful, and he had gone along with an unbroken impulse. But soon something occurred which brought with a terrible shock the sense that his plan might turn out to be as mad as all bold projects are seen to be when they have failed.

Mingled with the more headlong and half-drunken crowd there were some sharp-visaged men who loved the irrationality of riots for something else than its own sake, and who at present were not so much the richer as they desired to be, for the pains they had taken in coming to the Treby election, induced by certain prognostics gathered at Duffield on the nomination day that there might be the conditions favorable to that confusion which was always a harvest-time. It was known to some of these sharp men that Park Street led out towards the grand house of Treby Manor, which was as good — nay, better for their purpose than the bank. While Felix was entertaining his ardent purpose, these other sons of Adam were entertaining another ardent purpose of their peculiar sort, and the moment was come when they were to have their triumph.

From the front ranks backward towards Felix there ran a new summons — a new invitation.

“Let us go to Treby Manor!”

From that moment Felix was powerless; a new definite suggestion overrode his vaguer influence. There was a determined rush past Hobb's Lane, and not down it. Felix was carried along too. He did not know whether to wish the contrary. Once on the road, out of the town, with openings into fields and with the wide park at hand, it would have been easy for him to liberate himself from the crowd. At first it seemed to him the better part to do this, and to get back to the town as fast as he could, in the hope of finding the military and getting a detachment to come and save the Manor. But he reflected that the course of the mob had been sufficiently seen, and that there were plenty of people in Park Street to carry the information faster than he could. It seemed more necessary that he should secure the presence of some help for the family at the Manor by going there himself.

The Debarrys were not of the class he was wont to be anxious about; but Felix Holt's conscience was alive to the accusation that any danger they might be in now was brought on by a deed of his. In these moments of bitter vexation and disappointment, it did occur to him that very unpleasant

consequences might be hanging over him of a kind quite different from inward dissatisfaction ; but it was useless now to think of averting such consequences. As he was pressed along with the multitude into Treby Park, his very movement seemed to him only an image of the day's fatalities, in which the multitudinous small wickednesses of small selfish ends, really undirected towards any larger result, had issued in widely-shared mischief that might yet be hideous.

The light was declining : already the candles shone through many windows of the Manor. Already the foremost part of the crowd had burst into the offices, and adroit men were busy in the right places to find plate, after setting others to force the butler into unlocking the cellars ; and Felix had only just been able to force his way on to the front terrace, with the hope of getting to the rooms where he would find the ladies of the household and comfort them with the assurance that rescue must soon come, when the sound of horses' feet convinced him that the rescue was nearer than he had expected. Just as he heard the horses, he had approached the large window of a room, where a brilliant light suspended from the ceiling showed him a group of women clinging together in terror. Others of the crowd were pushing their way up the terrace-steps and gravel-slopes at various points. Hearing the horses, he kept his post in front of the window, and, motioning with his sabre, cried out to the on-comers, "Keep back ! I hear the soldiers coming." Some scrambled back, some paused automatically.

The louder and louder sound of the hoofs changed its pace and distribution. "Halt ! Fire !" Bang ! bang ! bang ! — came deafening the ears of the men on the terrace.

Before they had time or nerve to move, there was a rushing sound closer to them — again "Fire !" a bullet whizzed, and passed through Felix Holt's shoulder — the shoulder of the arm that held the naked weapon which shone in the light from the window.

Felix fell. The rioters ran confusedly, like terrified sheep. Some of the soldiers, turning, drove them along with the flat of their swords. The greater difficulty was to clear the invaded offices.

The Rector, who with another magistrate and several other gentlemen on horseback had accompanied the soldiers, now jumped on to the terrace, and hurried to the ladies of the family.

Presently there was a group round Felix, who had fainted,

and, reviving, had fainted again. He had had little food during the day, and had been overwrought. Two of the group were civilians, but only one of them knew Felix, the other being a magistrate not resident in Treby. The one who knew Felix was Mr. John Johnson, whose zeal for the public peace had brought him from Duffield when he heard that the soldiers were summoned.

"I know this man very well," said Mr. Johnson. "He is a dangerous character — quite revolutionary."

It was a weary night; and the next day, Felix, whose wound was declared trivial, was lodged in Loamford Jail. There were three charges against him: that he had assaulted a constable, that he had committed manslaughter (Tucker was dead from spinal concussion), and that he had led a riotous onslaught on a dwelling-house.

Four other men were committed: one of them for possessing himself of a gold cup with the Debarry arms on it; the three others, one of whom was the collier Dredge, for riot and assault.

That morning Treby town was no longer in terror; but it was in much sadness. Other men, more innocent than the hated Spratt, were groaning under severe bodily injuries. And poor Tucker's corpse was not the only one that had been lifted from the pavement. It is true that none grieved much for the other dead man, unless it be grief to say, "Poor old fellow!" He had been trampled upon, doubtless, where he fell drunkenly, near the entrance of the Seven Stars. This second corpse was old Tommy Trounsem, the bill-sticker — otherwise Thomas Transome, the last of a very old family-line.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

The fields are hoary with December's frost.
I too am hoary with the chills of age.
But through the fields and through the untrodden woods
Is rest and stillness — only in my heart
The pall of winter shrouds a throbbing life.

A WEEK after that Treby riot, Harold Transome was at Transome Court. He had returned from a hasty visit to town to keep his Christmas at this delightful country home, not in the best Christmas spirits. He had lost the election; but if that had been his only annoyance, he had good humor and

good sense enough to have borne it as well as most men, and to have paid the eight or nine thousand, which had been the price of ascertaining that he was not to sit in the next Parliament, without useless grumbling. But the disappointments of life can never, any more than its pleasures, be estimated singly; and the healthiest and most agreeable of men is exposed to that coincidence of various vexations, each heightening the effect of the other, which may produce in him something corresponding to the spontaneous and externally unaccountable moodiness of the morbid and disagreeable.

Harold might not have grieved much at a small riot in Treby, even if it had caused some expenses to fall on the county; but the turn which the riot had actually taken was a bitter morsel for rumination on more grounds than one. However the disturbances had arisen and been aggravated — and probably no one knew the whole truth on these points — the conspicuous, gravest incidents had all tended to throw the blame on the Radical party, that is to say, on Transome and on Transome's agents; and so far the candidateship and its results had done Harold dishonor in the county: precisely the opposite effect to that which was a dear object of his ambition. More than this, Harold's conscience was active enough to be very unpleasantly affected by what had befallen Felix Holt. His memory, always good, was particularly vivid in its retention of Felix Holt's complaint to him about the treating of the Sproxton men, and of the subsequent irritating scene in Jermyn's office, when the personage with the inauspicious name of Johnson had expounded to him the impossibility of revising an electioneering scheme once begun, and of turning your vehicle back when it had already begun to roll downhill. Remembering Felix Holt's words of indignant warning about hiring men with drink in them to make a noise, Harold could not resist the urgent impression that the offences for which Felix was committed were fatalities, not brought about by any willing co-operation of his with the rioters, but arising probably from some ill-judged efforts to counteract their violence. And this impression, which insisted on growing into a conviction, became in one of its phases an uneasy sense that he held evidence which would at once tend to exonerate Felix and to place himself and his agents in anything but a desirable light. It was likely that some one else could give equivalent evidence in favor of Felix — the little talkative Dissenting preacher, for example; but, anyhow, the affair with the Sproxton men would be ripped open and made

the worst of by the opposite parties. The man who has failed in the use of some indirectness, is helped very little by the fact that his rivals are men to whom that indirectness is a something human, very far from being alien. There remains this grand distinction, that he has failed, and that the jet of light is thrown entirely on his misdoings.

In this matter Harold felt himself a victim. Could he hinder the tricks of his agents? In this particular case he had tried to hinder them, and had tried in vain. He had not loved the two agents in question, to begin with; and now at this later stage of events he was more innocent than ever of bearing them anything but the most sincere ill-will. He was more utterly exasperated with them than he would probably have been if his one great passion had been for public virtue. Jermyn, with his John Johnson, had added this ugly dirty business of the Treby election to all the long-accumulating list of offences, which Harold was resolved to visit on him to the utmost. He had seen some handbills carrying the insinuation that there was a discreditable indebtedness to Jermyn on the part of the Transomes. If any such notions existed apart from electioneering slander, there was all the more reason for letting the world see Jermyn severely punished for abusing his power over the family affairs, and tampering with the family property. And the world certainly should see this with as little delay as possible. The cool confident assuming fellow should be bled to the last drop in compensation, and all connection with him be finally got rid of. Now that the election was done with, Harold meant to devote himself to private affairs, till everything lay in complete order under his own supervision.

This morning he was seated as usual in his private room, which had now been handsomely fitted up for him. It was but the third morning after the first Christmas he had spent in his English home for fifteen years, and the home looked like an eminently desirable one. The white frost lay on the broad lawn, on the many-formed leaves of the evergreens, and on the giant trees at a distance. Logs of dry oak blazed on the hearth; the carpet was like warm moss under his feet; he had breakfasted just according to his taste, and he had the interesting occupations of a large proprietor to fill the morning. All through the house now, steps were noiseless on carpets or on fine matting; there was warmth in hall and corridors; there were servants enough to do everything, and to do it at the right time. Skilful Dominic was always at hand

to meet his master's demands, and his bland presence diffused itself like a smile over the household, infecting the gloomy English mind with the belief that life was easy, and making his real predominance seem as soft and light as a down quilt. Old Mr. Transome had gathered new courage and strength since little Harry and Dominic had come, and since Harold had insisted on his taking drives. Mrs. Transome herself was seen on a fresh background with a gown of rich new stuff. And if, in spite of this, she did not seem happy, Harold either did not observe it, or kindly ignored it as the necessary frailty of elderly women whose lives have had too much of dulness and privation. Our minds get tricks and attitudes as our bodies do, thought Harold, and age stiffens them into unalterableness. "Poor mother! I confess I should not like to be an elderly woman myself. One requires a good deal of the purring cat for that, or else of the loving grandame. I wish she would take more to little Harry. I suppose she has her suspicions about the lad's mother, and is as rigid in those matters as in her Toryism. However, I do what I can; it would be difficult to say what there is wanting to her in the way of indulgence and luxury to make up for the old niggardly life."

And certainly Transome Court was now such a home as many women would covet. Yet even Harold's own satisfaction in the midst of its elegant comfort needed at present to be sustained by the expectation of gratified resentment. He was obviously less bright and enjoying than usual, and his mother, who watched him closely without daring to ask questions, had gathered hints and drawn inferences enough to make her feel sure that there was some storm gathering between him and Jermyn. She did not dare to ask questions, and yet she had not resisted the temptation to say something bitter about Harold's failure to get returned as a Radical, helping, with feminine self-defeat, to exclude herself more completely from any consultation by him. In this way poor women, whose power lies solely in their influence, make themselves like music out of tune, and only move men to run away.

This morning Harold had ordered his letters to be brought to him at the breakfast-table, which was not his usual practice. His mother could see that there were London business letters about which he was eager, and she had found out that the letter brought by a clerk the day before was to make an appointment with Harold for Jermyn to come to Transome

Court at eleven this morning. She observed Harold swallow his coffee and push away his plate with an early abstraction from the business of breakfast which was not at all after his usual manner. She herself ate nothing: her sips of tea seemed to excite her; her cheeks flushed, and her hands were cold. She was still young and ardent in her terrors; the passions of the past were living in her dread.

When Harold left the table she went into the long drawing-room, where she might relieve her restlessness by walking up and down, and catch the sound of Jermyn's entrance into Harold's room, which was close by. Here she moved to and fro amongst the rose-colored satin of chairs and curtains—the great story of this world reduced for her to the little tale of her own existence—dull obscurity everywhere, except where the keen light fell on the narrow track of her own lot, wide only for a woman's anguish. At last she heard the expected ring and footstep, and the opening and closing door. Unable to walk about any longer, she sank into a large cushioned chair, helpless and prayerless. She was not thinking of God's anger or mercy, but of her son's. She was thinking of what might be brought, not by death, but by life.

CHAPTER XXXV.

M. Check to your queen!
N. Nay, your own king is bare,
And moving so, you give yourself checkmate.

WHEN Jermyn entered the room, Harold, who was seated at his library table examining papers, with his back towards the light and his face towards the door, moved his head coldly. Jermyn said an ungracious "Good-morning"—as little as possible like a salutation to one who might regard himself as a patron. On the attorney's handsome face there was a black cloud of defiant determination, slightly startling to Harold, who had expected to feel that the overpowering weight of temper in the interview was on his own side. Nobody was ever prepared beforehand for this expression of Jermyn's face, which seemed as strongly contrasted with the cold impenetrableness which he preserved under the ordinary annoyances of business as with the bland radiance of his lighter moments.

Harold himself did not look amiable just then, but his

anger was of the sort that seeks a vent without waiting to give a fatal blow; it was that of a nature more subtly mixed than Jermyn's—less animally forcible, less unwavering in selfishness, and with more of high-bred pride. He looked at Jermyn with increased disgust and secret wonder.

"Sit down," he said, curtly.

Jermyn seated himself in silence, opened his great-coat, and took some papers from a side-pocket.

"I have written to Makepeace," said Harold, "to tell him to take the entire management of the election expenses. So you will transmit your accounts to him."

"Very well. I am come this morning on other business."

"If it's about the riot and the prisoners, I have only to say that I shall enter into no plans. If I am called on, I shall say what I know about that young fellow Felix Holt. People may prove what they can about Johnson's damnable tricks, or yours either."

"I am not come to speak about the riot. I agree with you in thinking that quite a subordinate subject." (When Jermyn had the black cloud over his face, he never hesitated or drawled, and made no Latin quotations.)

"Be so good, then, as to open your business at once," said Harold, in a tone of imperious indifference.

"That is precisely what I wish to do. I have here information from a London correspondent that you are about to file a bill against me in Chancery." Jermyn, as he spoke, laid his hand on the papers before him, and looked straight at Harold.

"In that case, the question for you is, how far your conduct as the family solicitor will bear investigation. But it is a question which you will consider quite apart from me."

"Doubtless. But prior to that there is a question which we must consider together."

The tone in which Jermyn said this gave an unpleasant shock to Harold's sense of mastery. Was it possible that he should have the weapon wrenched out of his hand?

"I shall know what to think of that," he replied, as haughtily as ever, "when you have stated what the question is."

"Simply, whether you will choose to retain the family estates, or lay yourself open to be forthwith legally deprived of them."

"I presume you refer to some underhand scheme of your own, on a par with the annuities you have drained us by in the name of Johnson," said Harold, feeling a new movement of anger. "If so, you had better state your scheme to my lawyers. Dymock and Halliwell."

"No. I think you will approve of my stating in your own ear first of all, that it depends on my will whether you remain an important landed proprietor in North Loamshire, or whether you retire from the county with the remainder of the fortune you have acquired in trade."

Jermyn paused, as if to leave time for this morsel to be tasted.

"What do you mean?" said Harold, sharply.

"Not any scheme of mine; but a state of the facts, resulting from the settlement of the estate made in 1729: a state of the facts which renders your father's title and your own title to the family estates utterly worthless as soon as the true claimant is made aware of his right."

"And you intend to inform him?"

"That depends. I am the only person who has the requisite knowledge. It rests with you to decide whether I shall use that knowledge against you; or whether I shall use it in your favor — by putting an end to the evidence that would serve to oust you in spite of your 'robust title of occupancy.'"

Jermyn paused again. He had been speaking slowly, but without the least hesitation, and with a bitter definiteness of enunciation. There was a moment or two before Harold answered, and then he said abruptly, —

"I don't believe you."

"I thought you were more shrewd," said Jermyn, with a touch of scorn. "I thought you understood that I had had too much experience to waste my time in telling fables to persuade a man who has put himself into the attitude of my deadly enemy."

"Well, then, say at once what your proofs are," said Harold, shaking in spite of himself, and getting nervous.

"I have no inclination to be lengthy. It is not more than a few weeks since I ascertained that there is in existence an heir of the Bycliffes, the old adversaries of your family. More curiously, it is only a few days ago — in fact, only since the day of the riot — that the Bycliffe claim has become valid, and that the right of remainder accrues to the heir in question."

"And how, pray?" said Harold, rising from his chair, and making a turn in the room, with his hands thrust in his pockets. Jermyn rose too, and stood near the hearth, facing Harold, as he moved to and fro.

"By the death of an old fellow who got drunk, and was trampled to death in the riot. He was the last of that Thomas Transome's line, by the purchase of whose interest your family

got its title to the estate. Your title died with him. It was supposed that the line had become extinct before—and on that supposition the old Bycliffes founded their claim. But I hunted up this man just about the time the last suit was closed. His death would have been of no consequence to you if there had not been a Bycliffe in existence; but I happen to know that there is, and that the fact can be legally proved.”

For a minute or two Harold did not speak, but continued to pace the room, while Jermyn kept his position, holding his hands behind him. At last Harold said, from the other end of the room, speaking in a scornful tone,—

“That sounds alarming. But it is not to be proved simply by your statement.”

“Clearly. I have here a document, with a copy which will back my statement. It is the opinion given on the case more than twenty years ago, and it bears the signature of the Attorney-General and the first conveyancer of the day.”

Jermyn took up the papers he had laid on the table, opening them slowly and coolly as he went on speaking, and as Harold advanced towards him.

“You may suppose that we spared no pains to ascertain the state of the title in the last suit against Maurice Christian Bycliffe, which threatened to be a hard run. This document is the result of a consultation; it gives an opinion which must be taken as a final authority. You may cast your eyes over that, if you please; I will wait your time. Or you may read the summing-up here,” Jermyn ended, holding out one of the papers to Harold, and pointing to a final passage.

Harold took the paper, with a slight gesture of impatience. He did not choose to obey Jermyn’s indication, and confine himself to the summing-up. He ran through the document. But in truth he was too much excited really to follow the details, and was rather acting than reading, till at length he threw himself into his chair and consented to bend his attention on the passage to which Jermyn had pointed. The attorney watched him as he read and twice re-read:—

“To sum up we are of opinion that the title of the present possessors of the Transome estates can be strictly proved to rest solely upon a base fee created under the original settlement of 1729, and to be good so long only as issue exists of the tenant in tail by whom that base fee was created. We feel satisfied by the evidence that such issue exists in the person of Thomas Transome, otherwise Trounsem, of Littleshaw. But upon his decease without issue we are of opinion that the right in remainder of the Bycliffe family will arise, which right would not be barred by any statute of limitation.”

When Harold's eyes were on the signatures to this document for the third time, Jermyn said, —

"As it turned out, the case being closed by the death of the claimant, we had no occasion for producing Thomas Transome, who was the old fellow I tell you of. The inquiries about him set him agog, and after they were dropped he came into this neighborhood, thinking there was something fine in store for him. Here, if you like to take it, is a memorandum about him. I repeat that he died in the riot. The proof is ready. And I repeat, that, to my knowledge, and mine only, there is a Bycliffe in existence; and that I know how the proof can be made out."

Harold rose from his chair again, and again paced the room. He was not prepared with any defiance.

"And where is he — this Bycliffe?" he said at last, stopping in his walk, and facing round towards Jermyn.

"I decline to say more till you promise to suspend proceedings against me."

Harold turned again, and looked out of the window, without speaking, for a moment or two. It was impossible that there should not be a conflict within him, and at present it was a very confused one. At last he said, —

"This person is in ignorance of his claim?"

"Yes."

"Has been brought up in an inferior station?"

"Yes," said Jermyn, keen enough to guess part of what was going on in Harold's mind. "There is no harm in leaving him in ignorance. The question is a purely legal one. And, as I said before, the complete knowledge of the case, as one of evidence, lies exclusively with me. I can nullify the evidence, or I can make it tell with certainty against you. The choice lies with you."

"I must have time to think of this," said Harold, conscious of a terrible pressure.

"I can give you no time unless you promise me to suspend proceedings."

"And then, when I ask you, you will lay the details before me?"

"Not without a thorough understanding beforehand. If I engage not to use my knowledge against you, you must engage in writing that on being satisfied by the details, you will cancel all hostile proceedings against me, and will not institute fresh ones on the strength of any occurrences now past."

"Well, I must have time," said Harold, more than ever

inclined to thrash the attorney, but feeling bound hand and foot with knots that he was not sure he could ever unfasten.

"That is to say," said Jermyn, with his black-browed persistence, "you will write to suspend proceedings."

Again Harold paused. He was more than ever exasperated, but he was threatened, mortified, and confounded by the necessity for an immediate decision between alternatives almost equally hateful to him. It was with difficulty that he could prevail on himself to speak any conclusive words. He walked as far as he could from Jermyn—to the other end of the room—then walked back to his chair and threw himself into it. At last he said, without looking at Jermyn, "I agree—I must have time."

"Very well. It is a bargain."

"No further than this," said Harold, hastily, flashing a look at Jermyn—"no further than this, that I require time, and therefore I give it to you."

"Of course. You require time to consider whether the pleasure of trying to ruin me—me to whom you are really indebted—is worth the loss of the Transome estates. I shall wish you good-morning."

Harold did not speak to him or look at him again, and Jermyn walked out of the room. As he appeared outside the door and closed it behind him, Mrs. Transome showed her white face at another door which opened on a level with Harold's in such a way that it was just possible for Jermyn not to see her. He availed himself of that possibility, and walked straight across the hall, where there was no servant in attendance to let him out, as if he believed that no one was looking at him who could expect recognition. He did not want to speak to Mrs. Transome at present; he had nothing to ask from her, and one disagreeable interview had been enough for him this morning.

She was convinced that he had avoided her, and she was too proud to arrest him. She was as insignificant now in his eyes as in her son's. "Men have no memories in their hearts," she said to herself, bitterly. Turning into her sitting-room, she heard the voices of Mr. Transome and little Harry at play together. She would have given a great deal at this moment if her feeble husband had not always lived in dread of her temper and her tyranny, so that he might have been fond of her now. She felt herself loveless; if she was important to any one, it was only to her old waiting-woman Denner.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Are these things then necessities?
Then let us meet them like necessities.

SHAKESPEARE : *Henry IV.*

See now the virtue living in a word!
Hobson will think of swearing it was noon
When he saw Dobson at the May-day fair,
To prove poor Dobson did not rob the mail.
'Tis neighbourly to save a neighbour's neck.
What harm in lying when you mean no harm?
But say 'tis perjury, then Hobson quakes—
He'll none of perjury.

Thus words embalm
The conscience of mankind; and Roman laws
Bring still a conscience to poor Hobson's aid.

Few men would have felt otherwise than Harold Transome felt, if, having a reversion tantamount to possession of a fine estate, carrying an association with an old name and considerable social importance, they were suddenly informed that there was a person who had a legal right to deprive them of these advantages; that person's right having never been contemplated by any one as more than a chance, and being quite unknown to himself. In ordinary cases a shorter possession than Harold's family had enjoyed was allowed by the law to constitute an indefeasible right; and if in rare and peculiar instances the law left the possessor of a long inheritance exposed to deprivation as a consequence of old obscure transactions, the moral reasons for giving legal validity to the title of long occupancy were not the less strong. Nobody would have said that Harold was bound to hunt out this alleged remainder-man and urge his rights upon him; on the contrary, all the world would have laughed at such conduct, and he would have been thought an interesting patient for a mad-doctor. The unconscious remainder-man was probably much better off left in his original station: Harold would not have been called upon to consider his existence, if it had not been presented to him in the shape of a threat from one who had power to execute the threat.

In fact, what he would have done had the circumstances been different, was much clearer than what he should choose to do or feel himself compelled to do in the actual crisis. He would not have been disgraced if, on a valid claim being urged,

he had got his lawyers to fight it out for him on the chance of eluding the claim by some adroit technical management. Nobody off the stage could be sentimental about these things, or pretend to shed tears of joy because an estate was handed over from a gentleman to a mendicant sailor with a wooden leg. And this chance remainder-man was perhaps some such specimen of inheritance as the drunken fellow killed in the riot. All the world would think the actual Transomes in the right to contest any adverse claim to the utmost. But then — it was not certain that they would win in the contest; and not winning, they would incur other loss besides that of the estate. There had been a little too much of such loss already.

But why, if it were not wrong to contest the claim, should he feel the most uncomfortable scruples about robbing the claim of its sting by getting rid of its evidence? It was a mortal disappointment — it was a sacrifice of indemnification — to abstain from punishing Jermyn. But even if he brought his mind to contemplate that as the wiser course, he still shrank from what looked like complicity with Jermyn; he still shrank from the secret nullification of a just legal claim. If he had only known the details, if he had known who this alleged heir was, he might have seen his way to some course that would not have grated on his sense of honor and dignity. But Jermyn had been too acute to let Harold know this: he had even carefully kept to the masculine pronoun. And he believed that there was no one besides himself who would or could make Harold any wiser. He went home persuaded that between this interview and the next which they would have together, Harold would be left to an inward debate, founded entirely on the information he himself had given. And he had not much doubt that the result would be what he desired. Harold was no fool: there were many good things he liked better in life than an irrational vindictiveness.

And it did happen that, after writing to London in fulfilment of his pledge, Harold spent many hours over that inward debate, which was not very different from what Jermyn imagined. He took it everywhere with him, on foot and on horseback, and it was his companion through a great deal of the night. His nature was not of a kind given to internal conflict, and he had never before been long undecided and puzzled. This unaccustomed state of mind was so painfully irksome to him — he rebelled so impatiently against the oppression of circumstances in which his quick temperament and habitual decision could not help him — that it added tenfold to his

hatred of Jermyn, who was the cause of it. And thus, as the temptation to avoid all risk of losing the estate grew and grew till scruples looked minute by the side of it, the difficulty of bringing himself to make a compact with Jermyn seemed more and more insurmountable.

But we have seen that the attorney was much too confident in his calculations. And while Harold was being gulled by his subjection to Jermyn's knowledge, independent information was on its way to him. The messenger was Christian, who, after as complete a survey of probabilities as he was capable of, had come to the conclusion that the most profitable investment he could make of his peculiar experience and testimony in relation to Bycliffe and Bycliffe's daughter, was to place them at the disposal of Harold Transome. He was afraid of Jermyn; he utterly distrusted Johnson; but he thought he was secure in relying on Harold Transome's care for his own interest; and he preferred above all issues the prospect of forthwith leaving the country with a sum that at least for a good while would put him at his ease.

When, only three mornings after the interview with Jermyn, Dominic opened the door of Harold's sitting-room, and said that "Meester Chreestian," Mr. Philip Debarry's courier and an acquaintance of his own at Naples, requested to be admitted on business of importance, Harold's immediate thought was that the business referred to the so-called political affairs which were just now his chief association with the name of Debarry, though it seemed an oddness requiring explanation, that a servant should be personally an intermediary. He assented, expecting something rather disagreeable than otherwise.

Christian wore this morning those perfect manners of a subordinate who is not servile, which he always adopted towards his unquestionable superiors. Mr. Debarry, who preferred having some one about him with as little resemblance as possible to a regular servant, had a singular liking for the adroit, quiet-mannered Christian, and would have been amazed to see the insolent assumption he was capable of in the presence of people like Mr. Lyon, who were of no account in society. Christian had that sort of cleverness which is said to "know the world"—that is to say, he knew the price-current of most things.

Aware that he was looked at as a messenger while he remained standing near the door with his hat in his hand, he said, with respectful ease, —

"You will probably be surprised, sir, at my coming to speak to you on my own account; and, in fact, I could not have thought of doing so if my business did not happen to be something of more importance to you than to any one else."

"You don't come from Mr. Debarry, then?" said Harold, with some surprise.

"No, sir. My business is a secret; and, if you please, must remain so."

"Is it a pledge you are demanding from me?" said Harold, rather suspiciously, having no ground for confidence in a man of Christian's position.

"Yes, sir; I am obliged to ask no less than that you will pledge yourself not to take Mr. Jermyn into confidence concerning what passes between us."

"With all my heart," said Harold, something like a gleam passing over his face. His circulation had become more rapid. "But what have you had to do with Jermyn?"

"He has not mentioned me to you then — has he, sir?"

"No; certainly not — never."

Christian thought, "Aha, Mr. Jermyn! you are keeping the secret well, are you?" He said, aloud, —

"Then Mr. Jermyn has never mentioned to you, sir, what I believe he is aware of — that there is danger of a new suit being raised against you on the part of a Bycliffe, to get the estate?"

"Ah!" said Harold, starting up, and placing himself with his back against the mantelpiece. He was electrified by surprise at the quarter from which this information was coming. Any fresh alarm was counteracted by the flashing thought that he might be enabled to act independently of Jermyn; and in the rush of feelings he could utter no more than an interjection. Christian concluded that Harold had had no previous hint.

"It is this fact, sir, that I came to tell you of."

"From some other motive than kindness to me, I presume," said Harold, with a slight approach to a smile.

"Certainly," said Christian, as quietly as if he had been stating yesterday's weather. "I should not have the folly to use any affectation with you, Mr. Transome. I lost considerable property early in life, and am now in the receipt of a salary simply. In the affair I have just mentioned to you I can give evidence which will turn the scale against you. I have no wish to do so, if you will make it worth my while to leave the country."

Harold listened as if he had been a legendary hero, selected for peculiar solicitation by the Evil One. Here was temptation in a more alluring form than before, because it was sweetened by the prospect of eluding Jermyn. But the desire to gain time served all the purposes of caution and resistance, and his indifference to the speaker in this case helped him to preserve perfect self-command.

"You are aware," he said, coolly, "that silence is not a commodity worth purchasing unless it is loaded. There are many persons, I dare say, who would like me to pay their travelling expenses for them. But they might hardly be able to show me that it was worth my while."

"You wish me to state what I know?"

"Well, that is a necessary preliminary to any further conversation."

"I think you will see, Mr. Transome, that, as a matter of justice, the knowledge I can give is worth something, quite apart from my future appearance or non-appearance as a witness. I must take care of my own interest, and if anything should hinder you from choosing to satisfy me for taking an essential witness out of the way, I must at least be paid for bringing you the information."

"Can you tell me who and where this Bycliffe is?"

"I can."

"— And give me a notion of the whole affair?"

"Yes: I have talked to a lawyer — not Jermyn — who is at the bottom of the law in the affair."

"You must not count on any wish of mine to suppress evidence or remove a witness. But name your price for the information."

"In that case I must be paid the higher for my information. Say, two thousand pounds."

"Two thousand devils!" burst out Harold, throwing himself into his chair again, and turning his shoulder towards Christian. New thoughts crowded upon him. "This fellow may want to decamp for some reason or other," he said to himself. "More people besides Jermyn know about his evidence, it seems. The whole thing may look black for me if it comes out. I shall be believed to have bribed him to run away, whether or not." Thus the outside conscience came in aid of the inner.

"I will not give you one sixpence for your information," he said, resolutely, "until time has made it clear that you do not intend to decamp, but will be forthcoming when you are

called for. On those terms I have no objection to give you a note, specifying that after the fulfilment of that condition — that is, after the occurrence of a suit, or the understanding that no suit is to occur — I will pay you a certain sum in consideration of the information you now give me !”

Christian felt himself caught in a vice. In the first instance he had counted confidently on Harold's ready seizure of his offer to disappear, and after some words had seemed to cast a doubt on this presupposition, he had inwardly determined to go away, whether Harold wished it or not, if he could get a sufficient sum. He did not reply immediately, and Harold waited in silence, inwardly anxious to know what Christian could tell, but with a vision at present so far cleared that he was determined not to risk incurring the imputation of having anything to do with scoundrelism. We are very much indebted to such a linking of events as makes a doubtful action look wrong.

Christian was reflecting that if he stayed, and faced some possible inconveniences of being known publicly as Henry Scaddon for the sake of what he might get from Esther, it would at least be wise to be certain of some money from Harold Transome, since he turned out to be of so peculiar a disposition as to insist on a punctilious honesty to his own disadvantage. Did he think of making a bargain with the other side? If so, he might be content to wait for the knowledge till it came in some other way. Christian was beginning to be afraid lest he should get nothing by this clever move of coming to Transome Court. At last he said, —

“I think, sir, two thousand would not be an unreasonable sum, on those conditions.”

“I will not give two thousand.”

“Allow me to say, sir, you must consider that there is no one whose interest it is to tell you as much as I shall, even if they could; since Mr. Jermyn, who knows it, has not thought fit to tell you. There may be use you don't think of in getting the information at once.”

“Well?”

“I think a gentleman should act liberally under such circumstances.”

“So I will.”

“I could not take less than a thousand pounds. It really would not be worth my while. If Mr. Jermyn knew I gave you the information, he would endeavor to injure me.”

“I will give you a thousand,” said Harold, immediately,

for Christian had unconsciously touched a sure spring. "At least, I'll give you a note to the effect I spoke of."

He wrote as he had promised, and gave the paper to Christian.

"Now, don't be circuitous," said Harold. "You seem to have a business-like gift of speech. Who and where is this Bycliffe?"

"You will be surprised to hear, sir, that she is supposed to be the daughter of the old preacher, Lyon, in Malthouse Yard."

"Good God! How can that be?" said Harold. At once the first occasion on which he had seen Esther rose in his memory—the little dark parlor—the graceful girl in blue, with the surprisingly distinguished manners and appearance.

"In this way. Old Lyon, by some strange means or other, married Bycliffe's widow when this girl was a baby. And the preacher didn't want the girl to know that he was not her real father: he told me that himself. But she is the image of Bycliffe, whom I knew well—an uncommonly fine woman—steps like a queen."

"I have seen her," said Harold, more than ever glad to have purchased this knowledge. "But now, go on."

Christian proceeded to tell all he knew, including his conversation with Jermyn, except so far as it had an unpleasant relation to himself.

"Then," said Harold, as the details seemed to have come to a close, "you believe that Miss Lyon and her supposed father are at present unaware of the claims that might be urged for her on the strength of her birth?"

"I believe so. But I need not tell you that where the lawyers are on the scent you can never be sure of anything long together. I must remind you, sir, that you have promised to protect me from Mr. Jermyn by keeping my confidence."

"Never fear. Depend upon it, I shall betray nothing to Mr. Jermyn."

Christian was dismissed with a "good-morning;" and while he cultivated some friendly reminiscences with Dominic, Harold sat chewing the cud of his new knowledge, and finding it not altogether so bitter as he had expected.

From the first, after his interview with Jermyn, the recoil of Harold's mind from the idea of strangling a legal right threw him on the alternative of attempting a compromise. Some middle course might be possible, which would be a less evil than a costly lawsuit, or than the total renunciation of the

estates. And now he had learned that the new claimant was a woman — a young woman, brought up under circumstances that would make the fourth of the Transome property seem to her an immense fortune. Both the sex and the social condition were of the sort that lies open to many softening influences. And having seen Esther, it was inevitable that, amongst the various issues, agreeable and disagreeable, depicted by Harold's imagination, there should present itself a possibility that would unite the two claims — his own, which he felt to be the rational, and Esther's, which apparently was the legal claim.

Harold, as he had constantly said to his mother, was "not a marrying man;" he did not contemplate bringing a wife to Transome Court for many years to come, if at all. Having little Harry as an heir, he preferred freedom. Western women were not to his taste: they showed a transition from the feebly animal to the thinking being, which was simply troublesome. Harold preferred a slow-witted large-eyed woman, silent and affectionate, with a load of black hair weighing much more heavily than her brains. He had seen no such woman in England, except one whom he had brought with him from the East.

Therefore Harold did not care to be married until or unless some surprising chance presented itself; and now that such a chance had occurred to suggest marriage to him, he would not admit to himself that he contemplated marrying Esther as a plan; he was only obliged to see that such an issue was not inconceivable. He was not going to take any step expressly directed towards that end: what he had made up his mind to, as the course most satisfactory to his nature under present urgencies, was to behave to Esther with a frank gentlemanliness, which must win her good-will, and incline her to save his family interest as much as possible. He was helped to this determination by the pleasure of frustrating Jermyn's contrivance to shield himself from punishment; and his most distinct and cheering prospect was, that within a very short space of time he should not only have effected a satisfactory compromise with Esther, but should have made Jermyn aware, by a very disagreeable form of announcement, that Harold Transome was no longer afraid of him. Jermyn should bite the dust.

At the end of these meditations he felt satisfied with himself and light-hearted. He had rejected two dishonest propositions, and he was going to do something that seemed

eminently graceful. But he needed his mother's assistance, and it was necessary that he should both confide in her and persuade her.

Within two hours after Christian left him, Harold begged his mother to come into his private room, and there he told her the strange and startling story, omitting, however, any particulars which would involve the identification of Christian as his informant. Harold felt that his engagement demanded his reticence; and he told his mother that he was bound to conceal the source of that knowledge which he had got independently of Jermyn.

Mrs. Transome said little in the course of the story: she made no exclamations, but she listened with close attention, and asked a few questions so much to the point as to surprise Harold. When he showed her the copy of the legal opinion which Jermyn had left with him, she said she knew it very well; she had a copy herself. The particulars of that last lawsuit were too well engraven on her mind: it happened at a time when there was no one to supersede her, and she was the virtual head of the family affairs. She was prepared to understand how the estate might be in danger; but nothing had prepared her for the strange details—for the way in which the new claimant had been reared and brought within the range of converging motives that had led to this revelation, least of all for the part Jermyn had come to play in the revelation. Mrs. Transome saw these things through the medium of certain dominant emotions that made them seem like a long-ripening retribution. Harold perceived that she was painfully agitated, that she trembled, and that her white lips would not readily lend themselves to speech. And this was hardly more than he expected. He had not liked the revelation himself when it had first come to him.

But he did not guess what it was in his narrative which had most pierced his mother. It was something that made the threat about the estate only a secondary alarm. Now, for the first time, she heard of the intended proceedings against Jermyn. Harold had not chosen to speak of them before; but having at last called his mother into consultation, there was nothing in his mind to hinder him from speaking without reserve of his determination to visit on the attorney his shameful maladministration of the family affairs.

Harold went through the whole narrative—of what he called Jermyn's scheme to catch him in a vice, and his power of triumphantly frustrating that scheme—in his usual rapid

way, speaking with a final decisiveness of tone: and his mother felt that if she urged any counter-consideration at all, she could only do so when he had no more to say.

"Now, what I want you to do, mother, if you can see this matter as I see it," Harold said in conclusion, "is to go with me to call on this girl in Malthouse Yard. I will open the affair to her; it appears she is not likely to have been informed yet; and you will invite her to visit you here at once, that all scandal, all hatching of law-mischief, may be avoided, and the thing may be brought to an amicable conclusion."

"It seems almost incredible — extraordinary — a girl in her position," said Mrs. Transome, with difficulty. It would have seemed the bitterest humiliating penance if another sort of suffering had left any room in her heart.

"I assure you she is a lady; I saw her when I was canvassing, and was amazed at the time. You will be quite struck with her. It is no indignity for you to invite her."

"Oh," said Mrs. Transome, with low-toned bitterness, "I must put up with all things as they are determined for me. When shall we go?"

"Well," said Harold, looking at his watch, "it is hardly two yet. We could really go to-day, when you have lunched. It is better to lose no time. I'll order the carriage."

"Stay," said Mrs. Transome, making a desperate effort. "There is plenty of time. I shall not lunch. I have a word to say."

Harold withdrew his hand from the bell, and leaned against the mantelpiece to listen.

"You see I comply with your wish at once, Harold?"

"Yes, mother, I'm much obliged to you for making no difficulties."

"You ought to listen to me in return."

"Pray go on," said Harold, expecting to be annoyed.

"What is the good of having these Chancery proceedings against Jermyn?"

"Good? This good: that fellow has burdened the estate with annuities and mortgages to the extent of three thousand a year; and the bulk of them, I am certain, he holds himself under the name of another man. And the advances this yearly interest represents, have not been much more than twenty thousand. Of course he has hoodwinked you, and my father never gave attention to these things. He has been up to all sorts of devil's work with the deeds; he didn't count on my coming back from Smyrna to fill poor Durfey's place.

He shall feel the difference. And the good will be, that I shall save almost all the annuities for the rest of my father's life, which may be ten years or more, and I shall get back some of the money, and I shall punish a scoundrel. That is the good."

"He will be ruined."

"That's what I intend," said Harold, sharply.

"He exerted himself a great deal for us in the old suits: every one said he had wonderful zeal and ability," said Mrs. Transome, getting courage and warmth as she went on. Her temper was rising.

"What he did, he did for his own sake, you may depend on that," said Harold, with a scornful laugh.

"There were very painful things in that last suit. You seem anxious about this young woman, to avoid all further scandal and contests in the family. Why don't you wish to do it in this case? Jermyn might be willing to arrange things amicably—to make restitution as far as he can—if he has done anything wrong."

"I will arrange nothing amicably with him," said Harold, decisively. "If he has ever done anything scandalous as our agent, let him bear the infamy. And the right way to throw the infamy on him is to show the world that he has robbed us, and that I mean to punish him. Why do you wish to shield such a fellow, mother? It has been chiefly through him that you have had to lead such a thrifty miserable life—you who used to make as brilliant a figure as a woman need wish."

Mrs. Transome's rising temper was turned into a horrible sensation, as painful as a sudden concussion from something hard and immovable when we have struck out with our fist, intending to hit something warm, soft, and breathing, like ourselves. Poor Mrs. Transome's strokes were sent jarring back on her by a hard unalterable past. She did not speak in answer to Harold, but rose from the chair as if she gave up the debate.

"Women are frightened at everything, I know," said Harold, kindly, feeling that he had been a little harsh after his mother's compliance. "And you have been used for so many years to think Jermyn a law of nature. Come, mother," he went on, looking at her gently, and resting his hands on her shoulders, "look cheerful. We shall get through all these difficulties. And this girl—I dare say she will be quite an interesting visitor for you. You have not had any young

girl about you for a long while. Who knows? she may fall deeply in love with me, and I may be obliged to marry her."

He spoke laughingly, only thinking how he could make his mother smile. But she looked at him seriously and said, "Do you mean that, Harold?"

"Am I not capable of making a conquest? Not too fat yet — a handsome, well-rounded youth of thirty-four?"

She was forced to look straight at the beaming face, with its rich dark color, just bent a little over her. Why could she not be happy in this son whose future she had once dreamed of, and who had been as fortunate as she had ever hoped? The tears came, not plenteously, but making her dark eyes as large and bright as youth had once made them without tears.

"There, there!" said Harold, coaxingly. "Don't be afraid. You shall not have a daughter-in-law unless she is a pearl. Now we will get ready to go."

In half an hour from that time Mrs. Transome came down, looking majestic in sables and velvet, ready to call on "the girl in Malthouse Yard." She had composed herself to go through this task. She saw there was nothing better to be done. After the resolutions Harold had taken, some sort of compromise with this oddly-placed heiress was the result most to be hoped for; if the compromise turned out to be a marriage — well, she had no reason to care much: she was already powerless. It remained to be seen what this girl was.

The carriage was to be driven round the back way, to avoid too much observation. But the late election affairs might account for Mr. Lyon's receiving a visit from the unsuccessful Radical candidate.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

I also could speak as ye do; if your soul were in my soul's stead, I could heap up words against you, and shake mine head at you. — *Book of Job.*

IN the interval since Esther parted with Felix Holt on the day of the riot, she had gone through so much emotion, and had already had so strong a shock of surprise, that she was prepared to receive any new incident of an unwonted kind with comparative equanimity.

When Mr. Lyon had got home again from his preaching excursion, Felix was already on his way to Loamford Jail. The little minister was terribly shaken by the news. He

saw no clear explanation of Felix Holt's conduct; for the statements Esther had heard were so conflicting that she had not been able to gather distinctly what had come out in the examination by the magistrates. But Mr. Lyon felt confident that Felix was innocent of any wish to abet a riot or the infliction of injuries; what he chiefly feared was that in the fatal encounter with Tucker he had been moved by a rash temper, not sufficiently guarded against by a prayerful and humble spirit.

"My poor young friend is being taught with mysterious severity the evil of a too confident self-reliance," he said to Esther, as they sat opposite to each other, listening and speaking sadly.

"You will go and see him, father?"

"Verily will I. But I must straightway go and see that poor afflicted woman, whose soul is doubtless whirled about in this trouble like a shapeless and unstable thing driven by divided winds." Mr. Lyon rose and took his hat hastily, ready to walk out, with his greatcoat flying open and exposing his small person to the keen air.

"Stay, father, pray, till you have had some food," said Esther, putting her hand on his arm. "You look quite weary and shattered."

"Child, I cannot stay. I can neither eat bread nor drink water till I have learned more about this young man's deeds, what can be proved and what cannot be proved against him. I fear he has none to stand by him in this town, for even by the friends of our church I have been oftentimes rebuked because he seemed dear to me. But, Esther, my beloved child —"

Here Mr. Lyon grasped her arm, and seemed in the need of speech to forget his previous haste. "I bear in mind this: the Lord knoweth them that are His; but we — we are left to judge by uncertain signs, that so we may learn to exercise hope and faith towards one another; and in this uncertainty I cling with awful hope to those whom the world loves not because their conscience, albeit mistakenly, is at war with the habits of the world. Our great faith, my Esther, is the faith of martyrs: I will not lightly turn away from any man who endures harshness because he will not lie; nay, though I would not wantonly grasp at ease of mind through an arbitrary choice of doctrine, I cannot but believe that the merits of the Divine Sacrifice are wider than our utmost charity. I once belived otherwise — but not now, not now."

The minister paused, and seemed to be abstractedly gazing at some memory: he was always liable to be snatched away by thoughts from the pursuit of a purpose which had seemed pressing. Esther seized the opportunity and prevailed on him to fortify himself with some of Lyddy's porridge before he went out on his tiring task of seeking definite trustworthy knowledge from the lips of various witnesses, beginning with that feminine darkener of counsel, poor Mrs. Holt.

She, regarding all her trouble about Felix in the light of a fulfilment of her own prophecies, treated the sad history with a preference for edification above accuracy, and for mystery above relevance, worthy of a commentator on the Apocalypse. She insisted chiefly, not on the important facts that Felix had sat at his work till after eleven, like a deaf man, had rushed out in surprise and alarm, had come back to report with satisfaction that things were quiet, and had asked her to set by his dinner for him — facts which would tell as evidence that Felix was disconnected with any project of disturbances, and was averse to them. These things came out incidentally in her long plaint to the minister; but what Mrs. Holt felt it essential to state was, that long before Michaelmas was turned, sitting in her chair, she had said to Felix that there would be a judgment on him for being so certain sure about the Pills and the Elixir.

"And now, Mr. Lyon," said the poor woman, who had dressed herself in a gown previously cast off, a front all out of curl, and a cap with no starch in it, while she held little coughing Job on her knee, — "and now you see — my words have come true sooner than I thought they would. Felix may contradict me if he will; but there he is in prison, and here am I, with nothing in the world to bless myself with but half a crown a week as I've saved by my own scraping, and this house I've got to pay rent for. It's not me has done wrong, Mr. Lyon: there's nobody can say it of me — not the orphan child on me knee is more innocent o' riot and murder and anything else as is bad. But when you've got a son so masterful and stopping medicines as Providence has sent, and his betters have been taking up and down the country since before he was a baby, it's o' no use being good here below. But he *was* a baby, Mr. Lyon, and I gave him the breast," — here poor Mrs. Holt's motherly love overcame her expository eagerness, and she fell more and more to crying as she spoke — "And to think there's folks saying now as he'll be transported, and his hair shaved off, and the treadmill, and everything. Oh dear!"

As Mrs. Holt broke off into sobbing, little Job also, who had got a confused yet profound sense of sorrow, and of Felix being hurt and gone away, set up a little wail of wondering misery.

"Nay, Mistress Holt," said the minister, soothingly, "enlarge not your grief by more than warrantable grounds. I have good hope that my young friend, your son, will be delivered from any severe consequences beyond the death of the man Tucker, which I fear will ever be a sore burthen on his memory. I feel confident that a jury of his countrymen will discern between misfortune, or it may be misjudgment, and an evil will, and that he will be acquitted of any grave offence."

"He never stole anything in his life, Mr. Lyon," said Mrs. Holt, reviving. "Nobody can throw it in my face as my son ran away with money like the young man at the bank — though he looked most respectable, and far different on a Sunday to what Felix ever did. And I know it's very hard fighting with constables; but they say Tucker's wife'll be a deal better off than she was before, for the great folks'll pension her, and she'll be put on all the charities, and her children at the Free School, and everything. Your trouble's easy borne when everybody gives it a lift for you; and if judge and jury wants to do right by Felix, they'll think of his poor mother, with the bread took out of her mouth, all but half a crown a week and furniture — which, to be sure, is most excellent, and of my own buying — and got to keep this orphim child as Felix himself brought on me. And I might send him back to his old grandfather on parish pay, but I'm not that woman, Mr. Lyon: I've a tender heart. And here's his little feet and toes, like marbil; do but look" — here Mrs. Holt drew off Job's sock and shoe, and showed a well-washed little foot — "and you'll perhaps say I might take a lodger; but it's easy talking; it isn't everybody at a loose-end wants a parlor and a bedroom; and if anything bad happens to Felix, I may as well go and sit in the parish Pound, and nobody to buy me out; for it's beyond everything how the church members find fault with my son. But I think they might leave his mother to find fault; for queer and masterful he might be, and flying in the face of the very Scripture about the physis, but he was most clever beyond anything — that I *will* say — and was his own father's lawful child, and me his mother, that was Mary Wall thirty years before ever I married his father." Here Mrs. Holt's feelings again became too much for her, but she

struggled on to say, sobbingly, "And if they're to transport him, I should like to go to the prison and take the orphelin child; for he was most fond of having him on his lap, and said he'd never marry; and there was One above overheard him, for he's been took at his word."

Mr. Lyon listened with low groans, and then tried to comfort her by saying that he would himself go to Loamford as soon as possible, and would give his soul no rest till he had done all he could do for Felix.

On one point Mrs. Holt's plaint tallied with his own forebodings, and he found them verified: the state of feeling in Treby among the Liberal Dissenting flock was unfavorable to Felix. None who had observed his conduct from the windows saw anything tending to excuse him, and his own account of his motives, given on his examination, was spoken of with head-shaking; if it had not been for his habit of always thinking himself wiser than other people, he would never have entertained such a wild scheme. He had set himself up for something extraordinary, and had spoken ill of respectable tradespeople. He had put a stop to the making of salable drugs, contrary to the nature of buying and selling, and to a due reliance on what Providence might effect in the human inside through the instrumentality of remedies unsuitable to the stomach, looked at in a merely secular light; and the result was what might have been expected. He had brought his mother to poverty, and himself into trouble. And what for? He had done no good to "the cause;" if he had fought about Church-rates, or had been worsted in some struggle in which he was distinctly the champion of Dissent and Liberalism, his case would have been one for gold, silver, and copper subscriptions, in order to procure the best defence; sermons might have been preached on him, and his name might have floated on flags from Newcastle to Dorchester. But there seemed to be no edification in what had befallen Felix. The riot at Treby, "turn it which way you would," as Mr. Muscat observed, was no great credit to Liberalism; and what Mr. Lyon had to testify as to Felix Holt's conduct in the matter of the Sproxton men, only made it clear that the defence of Felix was the accusation of his party. The whole affair, Mr. Nuttwood said, was dark and inscrutable, and seemed not to be one in which the interference of God's servants would tend to give the glory where the glory was due. That a candidate for whom the richer church members had all voted should have his name associated with the encourage-

ment of drunkenness, riot, and plunder, was an occasion for the enemy to blaspheme; and it was not clear how the enemy's mouth would be stopped by exertions in favor of a rash young man, whose interference had made things worse instead of better. Mr. Lyon was warned lest his human partialities should blind him to the interests of truth: it was God's cause that was endangered in this matter.

The little minister's soul was bruised; he himself was keenly alive to the complication of public and private regards in this affair, and suffered a good deal at the thought of Tory triumph in the demonstration that, excepting the attack on the Seven Stars, which called itself a Whig house, all damage to property had been borne by Tories. He cared intensely for his opinions, and would have liked events to speak for them in a sort of picture-writing that everybody could understand. The enthusiasms of the world are not to be stimulated by a commentary in small and subtle characters which alone can tell the whole truth; and the picture-writing in Felix Holt's troubles was of an entirely puzzling kind: if he were a martyr, neither side wanted to claim him. Yet the minister, as we have seen, found in his Christian faith a reason for clinging the more to one who had not a large party to back him. That little man's heart was heroic; he was not one of those Liberals who make their anxiety for "the cause" of Liberalism a plea for cowardly desertion.

Besides himself, he believed there was no one who could bear testimony to the remonstrances of Felix concerning the treating of the Sproxton men, except Jermyn, Johnson, and Harold Transome. Though he had the vaguest idea of what could be done in the case, he fixed his mind on the probability that Mr. Transome would be moved to the utmost exertion, if only as an atonement; but he dared not take any step until he had consulted Felix, who he foresaw was likely to have a very strong determination as to the help he would accept or not accept.

This last expectation was fulfilled. Mr. Lyon returned to Esther, after his day's journey to Loamford and back, with less of trouble and perplexity in his mind: he had at least got a definite course marked out, to which he must resign himself. Felix had declared that he would receive no aid from Harold Transome, except the aid he might give as an honest witness. There was nothing to be done for him but what was perfectly simple and direct. Even if the pleading of counsel had been permitted (and at that time it was not) on behalf of a prisoner

on trial for felony, Felix would have declined it: he would in any case have spoken in his own defence. He had a perfectly simple account to give, and needed not to avail himself of any legal adroitness. He consented to accept the services of a respectable solicitor in Loamford, who offered to conduct his case without any fees. The work was plain and easy, Felix said. The only witnesses who had to be hunted up at all were some who could testify that he had tried to take the crowd down Hobb's Lane, and that they had gone to the Manor in spite of him.

"Then he is not so much cast down as you feared, father?" said Esther.

"No, child; albeit he is pale and much shaken for one so stalwart. He hath no grief, he says, save for the poor man Tucker, and for his mother; otherwise his heart is without a burthen. We discoursed greatly on the sad effect of all this for his mother, and on the perplexed condition of human things, whereby even right action seems to bring evil consequences, if we have respect only to our own brief lives, and not to that larger rule whereby we are stewards of the eternal dealings, and not contrivers of our own success."

"Did he say nothing about me, father?" said Esther, trembling a little, but unable to repress her egoism.

"Yea; he asked if you were well, and sent his affectionate regards. Nay, he bade me say something which appears to refer to your discourse together when I was not present. 'Tell her,' he said, 'whatever they sentence me to, she knows they can't rob me of my vocation. With poverty for my bride, and preaching and pedagogy for my business, I am sure of a handsome establishment.' He laughed — doubtless bearing in mind some playfulness of thine."

Mr. Lyon seemed to be looking at Esther as he smiled, but she was not near enough for him to discern the expression of her face. Just then it seemed made for melancholy rather than for playfulness. Hers was not a childish beauty; and when the sparkle of mischief, wit, and vanity was out of her eyes, and the large look of abstracted sorrow was there, you would have been surprised by a certain grandeur which the smiles had hidden. That changing face was the perfect symbol of her mixed susceptible nature, in which battle was inevitable, and the side of victory uncertain.

She began to look on all that had passed between herself and Felix as something not buried, but embalmed and kept as a relic in a private sanctuary. The very entireness of her

pre-occupation about him, the perpetual repetition in her memory of all that had passed between them, tended to produce this effect. She lived with him in the past; in the future she seemed shut out from him. He was an influence above her life, rather than a part of it; some time or other, perhaps, he would be to her as if he belonged to the solemn admonishing skies, checking her self-satisfied pettiness with the suggestion of a wider life.

But not yet — not while her trouble was so fresh. For it was still *her* trouble, and not Felix Holt's. Perhaps it was a subtraction from his power over her, that she could never think of him with pity, because he always seemed to her too great and strong to be pitied: he wanted nothing. He evaded calamity by choosing privation. The best part of a woman's love is worship; but it is hard to her to be sent away with her precious spikenard rejected, and her long tresses too, that were let fall ready to soothe the wearied feet.

While Esther was carrying these things in her heart, the January days were beginning to pass by with their wonted wintry monotony, except that there was rather more of good cheer than usual remaining from the feast of Twelfth Night among the triumphant Tories, and rather more scandal than usual excited among the mortified Dissenters by the wilfulness of their minister. He had actually mentioned Felix Holt by name in his evening sermon, and offered up a petition for him in the evening prayer, also by name — not as “a young Ishmaelite, whom we would fain see brought back from the lawless life of the desert, and seated in the same fold even with the sons of Judah and of Benjamin,” a suitable periphrasis which Brother Kemp threw off without any effort, and with all the felicity of a suggestive critic. Poor Mrs. Holt, indeed, even in the midst of her grief, experienced a proud satisfaction, that though not a church member she was now an object of congregational remark and ministerial allusion. Feeling herself a spotless character standing out in relief on a dark background of affliction, and a practical contradiction to that extreme doctrine of human depravity which she had never “given in to,” she was naturally gratified and soothed by a notice which must be a recognition. But more influential hearers were of opinion, that in a man who had so many long sentences at command as Mr. Lyon, so many parentheses and modifying clauses, this naked use of a non-scriptural Treby name in an address to the Almighty was all the more offensive. In a low unlettered local preacher of the Wesleyan per-

suasion such things might pass; but a certain style in prayer was demanded from Independents, the most educated body in the ranks of orthodox Dissent. To Mr. Lyon such notions seemed painfully perverse, and the next morning he was declaring to Esther his resolution stoutly to withstand them, and to count nothing common or unclean on which a blessing could be asked, when the tenor of his thoughts was completely changed by a great shock of surprise which made both himself and Esther sit looking at each other in speechless amazement.

The cause was a letter brought by a special messenger from Duffield; a heavy letter addressed to Esther in a business-like manner, quite unexampled in her correspondence. And the contents of the letter were more startling than its exterior. It began:—

MADAM, — Herewith we send you a brief abstract of evidence which has come within our knowledge, that the right of remainder whereby the lineal issue of Edward Bycliffe can claim possession of the estates of which the entail was settled by John Justus Transome in 1729, now first accrues to you as the sole and lawful issue of Maurice Christian Bycliffe. We are confident of success in the prosecution of this claim, which will result to you in the possession of estates to the value, at the lowest, of from five to six thousand per annum —

It was at this point that Esther, who was reading aloud, let her hand fall with the letter on her lap, and with a palpitating heart looked at her father, who looked again, in silence that lasted for two or three minutes. A certain terror was upon them both, though the thoughts that laid that weight on the tongue of each were different.

It was Mr. Lyon who spoke first.

"This, then, is what the man named Christian referred to. I distrusted him, yet it seems he spoke truly."

"But," said Esther, whose imagination ran necessarily to those conditions of wealth which she could best appreciate, "do they mean that the Transomes would be turned out of Transome Court, and that I should go and live there? It seems quite an impossible thing."

"Nay, child, I know not. I am ignorant in these things, and the thought of worldly grandeur for you hath more of terror than of gladness for me. Nevertheless we must duly weigh all things, not considering aught that befalls us as a bare event, but rather as an occasion for faithful stewardship. Let us go to my study and consider this writing further."

How this announcement, which to Esther seemed as unpre-

pared as if it had fallen from the skies, came to be made to her by solicitors other than Batt & Cowley, the old lawyers of the Bycliffes, was by a sequence as natural, that is to say, as legally-natural, as any in the world. The secret worker of the apparent wonder was Mr. Johnson, who, on the very day when he wrote to give his patron, Mr. Jermyn, the serious warning that a bill was likely to be filed in Chancery against him, had carried forward with added zeal the business already commenced, of arranging with another firm his share in the profits likely to result from the prosecution of Esther Bycliffe's claim.

Jermyn's star was certainly going down, and Johnson did not feel an unmitigated grief. Beyond some troublesome declarations as to his actual share in transactions in which his name had been used, Johnson saw nothing formidable in prospect for himself. He was not going to be ruined, though Jermyn probably was: he was not a high-flyer, but a mere climbing-bird, who could hold on and get his livelihood just as well if his wings were clipped a little. And, in the mean time, here was something to be gained in this Bycliffe business, which, it was not unpleasant to think, was a nut that Jermyn had intended to keep for his own particular cracking, and which would be rather a severe astonishment to Mr. Harold Transome, whose manners towards respectable agents were such as leave a smart in a man of spirit.

Under the stimulus of small many-mixed motives like these, a great deal of business has been done in the world by well-clad and, in 1833, clean-shaven men, whose names are on charity-lists, and who do not know that they are base. Mr. Johnson's character was not much more exceptional than his double-chin.

No system, religious or political, I believe has laid it down as a principle that all men are alike virtuous, or even that all the people rated for £80 houses are an honor to their species.

our lots lay widely apart. You are not fit for poverty, or any work of difficulty. But remember what I once said to you about a vision of consequences; take care where your fortune leads you."

Her father had not spoken since they had ended their study and discussion of the story and the evidence as it was presented to them. Into this he had entered with his usual penetrating activity; but he was so accustomed to the impersonal study of narrative, that even in these exceptional moments the habit of half a century asserted itself, and he seemed sometimes not to distinguish the case of Esther's inheritance from a story in ancient history, until some detail recalled him to the profound feeling that a great, great change might be coming over the life of this child who was so close to him. At last he relapsed into total silence, and for some time Esther was not moved to interrupt it. He had sunk back in his chair, with his hand locked in hers, and was pursuing a sort of prayerful meditation: he lifted up no formal petition, but it was as if his soul travelled again over the facts he had been considering in the company of a guide ready to inspire and correct him. He was striving to purify his feeling in this matter from selfish or worldly dross—a striving which is that prayer without ceasing, sure to wrest an answer by its sublime importunity.

There is no knowing how long they might have sat in this way, if it had not been for the inevitable Lyddy reminding them dismally of dinner.

"Yes, Lyddy, we come," said Esther; and then, before moving, —

"Is there any advice you have in your mind for me, father?" The sense of awe was growing in Esther. Her intensest life was no longer in her dreams, where she made things to her own mind: she was moving in a world charged with forces.

"Not yet, my dear — save this: that you will seek special illumination in this juncture, and, above all, be watchful that your soul be not lifted up within you by what, rightly considered, is rather an increase of charge, and a call upon you to walk along a path which is indeed easy to the flesh, but dangerous to the spirit."

"You would always live with me, father?" Esther spoke under a strong impulse — partly affection, partly the need to grasp at some moral help. But she had no sooner uttered the words than they raised a vision, showing, as by a flash of lighting, the incongruity of that past which had created the sancti-

ties and affections of her life with that future which was coming to her. . . . The little rusty old minister, with the one luxury of his Sunday evening pipe, smoked up the kitchen chimney, coming to live in the midst of grandeur . . . but no! her father, with the grandeur of his past sorrow and his long struggling labors, forsaking his vocation, and vulgarly accepting an existence unsuited to him. . . . Esther's face flushed with the excitement of this vision and its reversed interpretation, which five months ago she would have been incapable of seeing. Her question to her father seemed like a mockery; she was ashamed. He answered slowly, —

"Touch not that chord yet, child. I must learn to think of thy lot according to the demands of Providence. We will rest a while from the subject; and I will seek calmness in my ordinary duties."

The next morning nothing more was said. Mr. Lyon was absorbed in his sermon-making, for it was near the end of the week, and Esther was obliged to attend to her pupils. Mrs. Holt came by invitation with little Job to share their dinner of roast-meat; and, after much of what the minister called unprofitable discourse, she was quitting the house when she hastened back with an astonished face, to tell Mr. Lyon and Esther, who were already in wonder at crashing, thundering sounds on the pavement, that there was a carriage stopping and stamping at the entry into Malthouse Yard, with "all sorts of fine liveries," and a lady and gentleman inside. Mr. Lyon and Esther looked at each other, both having the same name in their minds.

"If it's Mr. Transome or somebody else as is great, Mr. Lyon," urged Mrs. Holt, "you'll remember my son, and say he's got a mother with a character they may inquire into as much as they like. And never mind what Felix says, for he's so masterful he'd stay in prison and be transported whether or no, only to have his own way. For it's not to be thought but what the great people could get him off if they would; and it's very hard with a King in the country and all the texts in Proverbs about the King's countenance, and Solomon and the live baby —"

Mr. Lyon lifted up his hand deprecatingly, and Mrs. Holt retreated from the parlor-door to a corner of the kitchen, the outer doorway being occupied by Dominic, who was inquiring if Mr. and Miss Lyon were at home, and could receive Mrs. Transome and Mr. Harold Transome. While Dominic went back to the carriage Mrs. Holt escaped with her tiny compan-

ion to Zachary's, the pew-opener, observing to Lyddy, that she knew herself, and was not that woman to stay where she might not be wanted; whereupon Lyddy, differing fundamentally, admonished her parting ear that it was well if she knew herself to be dust and ashes — silently extending the application of this remark to Mrs. Transome as she saw the tall lady sweep in arrayed in her rich black and fur, with that fine gentleman behind her whose thick topknot of wavy hair, sparkling ring, dark complexion, and general air of worldly exaltation unconnected with chapel, were painfully suggestive to Lyddy of Herod, Pontius Pilate, or the much-quoted Gallio.

Harold Transome, greeting Esther gracefully, presented his mother, whose eagle-like glance, fixed on her from the first moment of entering, seemed to Esther to pierce her through. Mrs. Transome hardly noticed Mr. Lyon, not from studied haughtiness, but from sheer mental inability to consider him — as a person ignorant of natural history is unable to consider a fresh-water polyp otherwise than as a sort of animated weed, certainly not fit for table. But Harold saw that his mother was agreeably struck by Esther, who indeed showed to much advantage. She was not at all taken by surprise, and maintained a dignified quietude; but her previous knowledge and reflection about the possible dispossession of these Transomes gave her a softened feeling towards them which tinged her manners very agreeably.

Harold was carefully polite to the minister, throwing out a word to make him understand that he had an important part in the important business which had brought this unannounced visit; and the four made a group seated not far off each other near the window, Mrs. Transome and Esther being on the sofa.

"You must be astonished at a visit from me, Miss Lyon," Mrs. Transome began; "I seldom come to Treby Magna. Now I see you, the visit is an unexpected pleasure; but the cause of my coming is business of a serious nature, which my son will communicate to you."

"I ought to begin by saying that what I have to announce to you is the reverse of disagreeable, Miss Lyon," said Harold, with lively ease. "I don't suppose the world would consider it very good news for me; but a rejected candidate, Mr. Lyon," Harold went on, turning graciously to the minister, "begins to be injured to loss and misfortune."

"Truly, sir," said Mr. Lyon, with a rather sad solemnity,

"your allusion hath a grievous bearing for me, but I will not retard your present purpose by further remark."

"You will never guess what I have to disclose," said Harold, again looking at Esther, "unless, indeed, you have had some previous intimation of it."

"Does it refer to law and inheritance?" said Esther, with a smile. She was already brightened by Harold's manner. The news seemed to be losing its chillness, and to be something really belonging to warm, comfortable, interesting life.

"Then you have already heard of it?" said Harold, inwardly vexed, but sufficiently prepared not to seem so.

"Only yesterday," said Esther, quite simply. "I received a letter from some lawyers with a statement of many surprising things, showing that I was an heiress" — here she turned very prettily to address Mrs. Transome — "which, as you may imagine, is one of the last things I could have supposed myself to be."

"My dear," said Mrs. Transome with elderly grace, just laying her hand for an instant on Esther's, "it is a lot that would become you admirably."

Esther blushed, and said playfully, —

"Oh, I know what to buy with fifty pounds a-year, but I know the price of nothing beyond that."

Her father sat looking at her through his spectacles, stroking his chin. It was amazing to herself that she was taking so lightly now what had caused her such deep emotion yesterday.

"I dare say, then," said Harold, "you are more fully possessed of particulars than I am. So that my mother and I need only tell you what no one else can tell you — that is, what are her and my feelings and wishes under these new and unexpected circumstances."

"I am most anxious," said Esther, with a grave beautiful look of respect to Mrs. Transome — "most anxious on that point. Indeed, being of course in uncertainty about it, I have not yet known whether I could rejoice." Mrs. Transome's glance had softened. She liked Esther to look at her.

"Our chief anxiety," she said, knowing what Harold wished her to say, "is, that there may be no contest, no useless expenditure of money. Of course we will surrender what can be rightfully claimed."

"My mother expresses our feeling precisely, Miss Lyon," said Harold. "And I'm sure, Mr. Lyon, you will understand our desire."

"Assuredly, sir. My daughter would in any case have had my advice to seek a conclusion which would involve no strife. We endeavor, sir, in our body, to hold to the apostolic rule that one Christian brother should not go to law with another; and I, for my part, would extend this rule to all my fellow-men, apprehending that the practice of our courts is little consistent with the simplicity that is in Christ."

"If it is to depend on my will," said Esther, "there is nothing that would be more repugnant to me than any struggle on such a subject. But can't the lawyers go on doing what they will in spite of me? It seems that this is what they mean."

"Not exactly," said Harold, smiling. "Of course they live by such struggles as you dislike. But we can thwart them by determining not to quarrel. It is desirable that we should consider the affair together, and put it into the hands of honorable solicitors. I assure you we Transomes will not contend for what is not our own."

"And this is what I have come to beg of you," said Mrs. Transome. "It is that you will come to Transome Court — and let us take full time to arrange matters. Do oblige me: you shall not be teased more than you like by an old woman: you shall do just as you please, and become acquainted with your future home, since it is to be yours. I can tell you a world of things that you will want to know; and the business can proceed properly."

"Do consent," said Harold, with winning brevity.

Esther was flushed, and her eyes were bright. It was impossible for her not to feel that the proposal was a more tempting step towards her change of condition than she could have thought of beforehand. She had forgotten that she was in any trouble. But she looked towards her father, who was again stroking his chin, as was his habit when he was doubting and deliberating.

"I hope you do not disapprove of Miss Lyon's granting us this favor?" said Harold to the minister.

"I have nothing to oppose to it, sir, if my daughter's own mind is clear as to her course."

"You will come — now — with us," said Mrs. Transome, persuasively. "You will go back with us in the carriage."

Harold was highly gratified with the perfection of his mother's manner on this occasion, which he had looked forward to as difficult. Since he had come home again, he had never seen her so much at her ease, or with so much benign-

nancy in her face. The secret lay in the charm of Esther's sweet young deference, a sort of charm that had not before entered into Mrs. Transome's elderly life. Esther's pretty behavior, it must be confessed, was not fed entirely from lofty moral sources: over and above her really generous feeling, she enjoyed Mrs. Transome's accent, the high-bred quietness of her speech, the delicate odor of her drapery. She had always thought that life must be particularly easy if one could pass it among refined people; and so it seemed at this moment. She wished, unmixedly, to go to Transome Court.

"Since my father has no objection," she said, "and you urge me so kindly. But I must beg for time to pack up a few clothes."

"By all means," said Mrs. Transome. "We are not at all pressed."

When Esther had left the room, Harold said, "Apart from our immediate reason for coming, Mr. Lyon, I could have wished to see you about these unhappy consequences of the election contest. But you will understand that I have been much preoccupied with private affairs."

"You have well said that the consequences are unhappy, sir. And but for a reliance on something more than human calculation, I know not which I should most bewail — the scandal which wrong-dealing has brought on right principles, or the snares which it laid for the feet of a young man who is dear to me. 'One soweth, and another reapeth,' is a verity that applies to evil as well as good."

"You are referring to Felix Holt. I have not neglected steps to secure the best legal help for the prisoners; but I am given to understand that Holt refuses any aid from me. I hope he will not go rashly to work in speaking in his own defence without any legal instruction. It is an opprobrium of our law that no counsel is allowed to plead for the prisoner in cases of felony. A ready tongue may do a man as much harm as good in a court of justice. He piques himself on making a display, and displays a little too much."

"Sir, you know him not," said the little minister, in his deeper tone. "He would not accept, even if it were accorded, a defence wherein the truth was screened or avoided, — not from a vainglorious spirit of self-exhibition, for he hath a singular directness and simplicity of speech; but from an averseness to a profession wherein a man may without shame seek to justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him."

"It's a pity a fine young fellow should do himself harm by fanatical notions of that sort. I could at least have procured the advantage of first-rate consultation. He didn't look to me like a dreamy personage."

"Nor is he dreamy; rather, his excess lies in being too practical."

"Well, I hope you will not encourage him in such irrationality: the question is not one of misrepresentation, but of adjusting fact, so as to raise it to the power of evidence. Don't you see that?"

"I do, I do. But I distrust not Felix Holt's discernment in regard to his own case. He builds not on doubtful things, and hath no illusory hopes; on the contrary, he is of a too-scornful incredulity where I would fain see a more childish faith. But he will hold no belief without action corresponding thereto; and the occasion of his return to this his native place at a time which has proved fatal, was no other than his resolve to hinder the sale of some drugs, which had chiefly supported his mother, but which his better knowledge showed him to be pernicious to the human frame. He undertook to support her by his own labor: but, sir, I pray you to mark — and old as I am, I will not deny that this young man instructs me herein — I pray you to mark the poisonous confusion of good and evil which is the wide-spreading effect of vicious practices. Through the use of undue electioneering means — concerning which, however, I do not accuse you farther than of having acted the part of him who washes his hands when he delivers up to others the exercise of an iniquitous power — Felix Holt is, I will not scruple to say, the innocent victim of a riot; and that deed of strict honesty, whereby he took on himself the charge of his aged mother, seems now to have deprived her of sufficient bread, and is even an occasion of reproach to him from the weaker brethren."

"I shall be proud to supply her as amply as you think desirable," said Harold, not enjoying this lecture.

"I will pray you to speak of this question with my daughter, who, it appears, may herself have large means at command, and would desire to minister to Mrs. Holt's needs with all friendship and delicacy. For the present, I can take care that she lacks nothing essential."

As Mr. Lyon was speaking, Esther re-entered, equipped for her drive. She laid her hand on her father's arm, and said, "You will let my pupils know at once, will you, father?"

"Doubtless, my dear," said the old man, trembling a little

under the feeling that this departure of Esther's was a crisis. Nothing again would be as it had been in their mutual life. But he feared that he was being mastered by a too tender self-regard, and struggled to keep himself calm.

Mrs. Transome and Harold had both risen.

"If you are quite ready, Miss Lyon," said Harold, divining that the father and daughter would like to have an unobserved moment, "I will take my mother to the carriage, and come back for you."

When they were alone, Esther put her hands on her father's shoulders and kissed him.

"This will not be a grief to you, I hope, father? You think it is better that I should go?"

"Nay, child, I am weak. But I would fain be capable of a joy quite apart from the accidents of my aged earthly existence, which, indeed, is a petty and almost dried-up fountain, — whereas to the receptive soul the river of life pauseth not, nor is diminished."

"Perhaps you will see Felix Holt again and tell him everything?"

"Shall I say aught to him for you?"

"Oh no; only that Job Tudge has a little flannel shirt and a box of lozenges," said Esther, smiling. "Ah, I hear Mr. Transome coming back. I must say good-by to Lyddy, else she will cry over my hard heart."

In spite of all the grave thoughts that had been, Esther felt it a very pleasant as well as new experience to be led to the carriage by Harold Transome, to be seated on soft cushions, and bowled along, looked at admiringly and deferentially by a person opposite, whom it was agreeable to look at in return, and talked to with suavity and liveliness. Towards what prospect was that easy carriage really leading her. She could not be always asking herself Mentor-like questions. Her young bright nature was rather weary of the sadness that had grown heavier in these last weeks, like a chill white mist hopelessly veiling the day. Her fortune was beginning to appear worthy of being called good fortune. She had come to a new stage in her journey; a new day had arisen on new scenes, and her young untired spirit was full of curiosity.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

No man believes that many-textured knowledge and skill — as a just idea of the solar system, or the power of painting flesh, or of reading written harmonies — can come late and of a sudden; yet many will not stick at believing that happiness can come at any day and hour solely by a new disposition of events; though there is nought least capable of a magical production than a mortal's happiness, which is mainly a complex of habitual relations and dispositions not to be wrought by news from foreign parts, or any whirling of fortune's wheel for one on whose brow Time has written legibly.

SOME days after Esther's arrival at Transome Court, Denner, coming to dress Mrs. Transome before dinner — a labor of love for which she had ample leisure now — found her mistress seated with more than ever of that marble aspect of self-absorbed suffering, which to the waiting-woman's keen observation had been gradually intensifying itself during the past week. She had tapped at the door without having been summoned, and she had ventured to enter though she had heard no voice saying "Come in."

Mrs. Transome had on a dark warm dressing-gown, hanging in thick folds about her, and she was seated before a mirror, which filled a panel from the floor to the ceiling. The room was bright with the light of the fire and of wax candles. For some reason, contrary to her usual practice, Mrs. Transome had herself unfastened her abundant gray hair, which rolled backward in a pale sunless stream over her dark dress. She was seated before the mirror apparently looking at herself, her brow knit in one deep furrow, and her jewelled hands laid one above the other on her knee. Probably she had ceased to see the reflection in the mirror, for her eyes had the fixed wide-open look that belongs not to examination, but to revery. Motionless in that way, her clear-cut features keeping distinct record of past beauty, she looked like an image faded, dried, and bleached by uncounted suns, rather than a breathing woman who had numbered the years as they passed, and had a consciousness within her which was the slow deposit of those ceaseless rolling years.

Denner, with all her ingrained and systematic reserve, could not help showing signs that she was startled, when, peering from between her half-closed eyelids, she saw the motionless image in the mirror opposite to her as she entered. Her

gentle opening of the door had not roused her mistress, to whom the sensations produced by Denner's presence were as little disturbing as those of a favorite cat. But the slight cry, and the start reflected in the glass, were unusual enough to break the reverie: Mrs. Transome moved, leaned back in her chair, and said, —

"So you're come at last, Denner?"

"Yes, madam; it is not late. I'm sorry you should have undone your hair yourself."

"I undid it to see what an old hag I am. These fine clothes you put on me, Denner, are only a smart shroud."

"Pray don't talk so, madam. If there's anybody doesn't think it pleasant to look at you, so much the worse for them. For my part, I've seen no young ones fit to hold up your train. Look at your likeness down below; and though you're older now, what signifies? I wouldn't be Letty in the scullery because she's got red cheeks. She mayn't know she's a poor creature, but I know it, and that's enough for me: I know what sort of a dowdy draggletail she'll be in ten years' time. I would change with nobody, madam. And if troubles were put up to market, I'd sooner buy old than new. It's something to have seen the worst."

"A woman never has seen the worst till she is old, Denner," said Mrs. Transome, bitterly.

The keen little waiting-woman was not clear as to the cause of her mistress's added bitterness; but she rarely brought herself to ask questions, when Mrs. Transome did not authorize them by beginning to give her information. Banks the bailiff and the head-servant had nodded and winked a good deal over the certainty that Mr. Harold was "none so fond" of Jermyn, but this was a subject on which Mrs. Transome had never made up her mind to speak, and Denner knew nothing definite. Again, she felt quite sure that there was some important secret connected with Esther's presence in the house; she suspected that the close Dominic knew the secret, and was more trusted than she was, in spite of her forty years' service; but any resentment on this ground would have been an entertained reproach against her mistress, inconsistent with Denner's creed and character. She inclined to the belief that Esther was the immediate cause of the new discontent.

"If there's anything worse coming to you, I should like to know what it is, madam," she said, after a moment's silence, speaking always in the same low quick way, and keeping up her quiet labors. "When I awake at cock-crow, I'd sooner

have one real grief on my mind than twenty false. It's better to know one's robbed than to think one's going to be murdered."

"I believe you are the creature in the world that loves me best, Denner; yet you will never understand what I suffer. It's of no use telling you. There's no folly in you, and no heartache. You are made of iron. You have never had any trouble."

"I've had some of your trouble, madam."

"Yes, you good thing. But as a sick-nurse, that never caught the fever. You never even had a child."

"I can feel for things I never went through. I used to be sorry for the poor French Queen when I was young: I'd have lain cold for her to lie warm. I know people have feelings according to their birth and station. And you always took things to heart, madam, beyond anybody else. But I hope there's nothing new, to make you talk of the worst."

"Yes, Denner, there is — there is," said Mrs. Transome, speaking in a low tone of misery, while she bent for her headdress to be pinned on.

"Is it this young lady?"

"Why, what do you think about her, Denner?" said Mrs. Transome, in a tone of more spirit, rather curious to hear what the old woman would say.

"I don't deny she's graceful, and she has a pretty smile and very good manners: it's quite unaccountable by what Banks says about her father. I know nothing of those Treby townsfolk myself, but for my part I'm puzzled. I'm fond of Mr. Harold. I always shall be, madam. I was at his bringing into the world, and nothing but his doing wrong by you would turn me against him. But the servants all say he's in love with Miss Lyon."

"I wish it were true, Denner," said Mrs. Transome, energetically. "I wish he were in love with her, so that she could master him, and make him do what she pleased."

"Then it is not true — what they say?"

"Not true that she will ever master him. No woman ever will. He will make her fond of him, and afraid of him. That's one of the things you have never gone through, Denner. A woman's love is always freezing into fear. She wants everything, she is secure of nothing. This girl has a fine spirit — plenty of fire and pride and wit. Men like such captives, as they like horses that champ the bit and paw the ground: they feel more triumph in their mastery. What is

the use of a woman's will? — if she tries, she doesn't get it, and she ceases to be loved. God was cruel when he made women."

Denner was used to such outbursts as this. Her mistress's rhetoric and temper belonged to her superior rank, her grand person, and her piercing black eyes. Mrs. Transome had a sense of impiety in her words which made them all the more tempting to her impotent anger. The waiting-woman had none of that awe which could be turned into defiance: the Sacred Grove was a common thicket to her.

"It mayn't be good-luck to be a woman," she said. "But one begins with it from a baby: one gets used to it. And I shouldn't like to be a man — to cough so loud, and stand straddling about on a wet day, and be so wasteful with meat and drink. They're a coarse lot, I think. Then I needn't make a trouble of this young lady, madam," she added, after a moment's pause.

"No, Denner. I like her. If that were all — I should like Harold to marry her. It would be the best thing. If the truth were known — and it will be known soon — the estate is hers by law — such law as it is. It's a strange story: she's a Bycliffe really."

Denner did not look amazed, but went on fastening her mistress's dress, as she said, —

"Well, madam, I was sure there was something wonderful at the bottom of it. And turning the old lawsuits and everything else over in my mind, I thought the law might have something to do with it. Then she is a born lady?"

"Yes; she has good blood in her veins."

"We talked that over in the housekeeper's room — what a hand and an instep she has, and how her head is set on her shoulders — almost like your own, madam. But her lightish complexion spoils her, to my thinking. And Dominic said Mr. Harold never admired that sort of woman before. There's nothing that smooth fellow couldn't tell you if he would: he knows the answers to riddles before they're made. However, he knows how to hold his tongue; I'll say that for him. And so do I, madam."

"Yes, yes; you will not talk of it till other people are talking of it."

"And so, if Mr. Harold married her, it would save all fuss and mischief?"

"Yes — about the estate."

"And he seems inclined; and she'll not refuse him, I'll

answer for it. And you like her, madam. There's everything to set your mind at rest."

Denner was putting the finishing-touch to Mrs. Transome's dress by throwing an Indian scarf over her shoulders, and so completing the contrast between the majestic lady in costume and the dishevelled Hecuba-like woman whom she had found half an hour before.

"I am not at rest!" Mrs. Transome said, with slow distinctness, moving from the mirror to the window, where the blind was not drawn down, and she could see the chill white landscape and the far-off unheeding stars.

Denner, more distressed by her mistress's suffering than she could have been by anything else, took up with the instinct of affection a gold vinaigrette which Mrs. Transome often liked to carry with her, and going up to her put it into her hand gently. Mrs. Transome grasped the little woman's hand hard, and held it so.

"Denner," she said, in a low tone, "if I could choose at this moment, I would choose that Harold should never have been born."

"Nay, my dear" (Denner had only once before in her life said "my dear" to her mistress), "it was a happiness to you then."

"I don't believe I felt the happiness then as I feel the misery now. It is foolish to say people can't feel much when they are getting old. Not pleasure, perhaps — little comes. But they can feel they are forsaken — why, every fibre in me seems to be a memory that makes a pang. They can feel that all the love in their lives is turned to hatred or contempt."

"Not mine, madam, not mine. Let what would be, I should want to live for your sake, for fear you should have nobody to do for you as I would."

"Ah, then, you are a happy woman, Denner; you have loved somebody for forty years who is old and weak now, and can't do without you."

The sound of the dinner-gong resounded below, and Mrs. Transome let the faithful hand fall again.

CHAPTER XL.

"She's beautiful; and therefore to be wooed:
She is a woman; therefore to be won."

Henry VI.

If Denner had had a suspicion that Esther's presence at Transome Court was not agreeable to her mistress, it was impossible to entertain such a suspicion with regard to the other members of the family. Between her and little Harry there was an extraordinary fascination. This creature, with the soft broad brown cheeks, low forehead, great black eyes, tiny well-defined nose, fierce biting tricks towards every person and thing he disliked, and insistence on entirely occupying those he liked, was a human specimen such as Esther had never seen before, and she seemed to be equally original in Harry's experience. At first sight her light complexion and her blue gown, probably also her sunny smile and her hands stretched out towards him, seemed to make a show for him as of a new sort of bird: he threw himself backward against his "Gappa," as he called old Mr. Transome, and stared at this new-comer with the gravity of a wild animal. But she had no sooner sat down on the sofa in the library than he climbed up to her, and began to treat her as an attractive object in natural history, snatched up her curls with his brown fist, and, discovering that there was a little ear under them, pinched it and blew into it, pulled at her coronet of plaits, and seemed to discover with satisfaction that it did not grow at the summit of her head, but could be dragged down and altogether undone. Then finding that she laughed, tossed him back, kissed, and pretended to bite him — in fact, was an animal that understood fun — he rushed off and made Dominic bring a small menagerie of white-mice, squirrels, and birds, with Moro, the black spaniel, to make her acquaintance. Whomsoever Harry liked, it followed that Mr. Transome must like: "Gappa," along with Nimrod the retriever, was part of the menagerie, and perhaps endured more than all the other live creatures in the way of being tumbled about. Seeing that Esther bore having her hair pulled down quite merrily, and that she was willing to be harnessed and beaten, the old

man began to confide to her, in his feeble, smiling, and rather jerking fashion, Harry's remarkable feats: how he had one day, when Gappa was asleep, unpinned a whole drawerful of beetles, to see if they would fly away; then, disgusted with their stupidity, was about to throw them all on the ground and stamp on them, when Dominic came in and rescued these valuable specimens; also, how he had subtly watched Mrs. Transome at the cabinet where she kept her medicines, and, when she had left it for a little while without locking it, had gone to the drawers and scattered half the contents on the floor. But what old Mr. Transome thought the most wonderful proof of an almost preternatural cleverness was, that Harry would hardly ever talk, but preferred making inarticulate noises, or combining syllables after a method of his own.

"He can talk well enough if he likes," said Gappa, evidently thinking that Harry, like the monkeys, had deep reasons for his reticence.

"You mind him," he added, nodding at Esther, and shaking with low-toned laughter. "You'll hear: he knows the right names of things well enough, but he likes to make his own. He'll give you one all to yourself before long."

And when Harry seemed to have made up his mind distinctly that Esther's name was "Boo," Mr. Transome nodded at her with triumphant satisfaction, and then told her in a low whisper, looking round cautiously beforehand, that Harry would never call Mrs. Transome "Gamma," but always "Bite."

"It's wonderful!" said he, laughing slyly.

The old man seemed so happy now in the new world created for him by Dominic and Harry, that he would perhaps have made a holocaust of his flies and beetles if it had been necessary in order to keep this living, lively kindness about him. He no longer confined himself to the library, but shuffled along from room to room, staying and looking on at what was going forward wherever he did not find Mrs. Transome alone.

To Esther the sight of this feeble-minded, timid, paralytic man, who had long abdicated all mastery over the things that were his, was something piteous. Certainly this had never been part of the furniture she had imagined for the delightful aristocratic dwelling in her Utopia; and the sad irony of such a lot impressed her the more because in her father she was accustomed to age accompanied with mental acumen and activity. Her thoughts went back in conjecture over the past life of Mr. and Mrs. Transome, a couple so strangely different

from each other. She found it impossible to arrange their existence in the seclusion of this fine park and in this lofty large-roomed house, where it seemed quite ridiculous to be anything so small as a human being, without finding it rather dull. Mr. Transome had always had his beetles, but Mrs. Transome — ? It was not easy to conceive that the husband and wife had ever been very fond of each other.

Esther felt at her ease with Mrs. Transome: she was gratified by the consciousness — for on this point Esther was very quick — that Mrs. Transome admired her, and looked at her with satisfied eyes. But when they were together in the early days of her stay, the conversation turned chiefly on what happened in Mrs. Transome's youth — what she wore when she was presented at Court — who were the most distinguished and beautiful women at that time — the terrible excitement of the French Revolution — the emigrants she had known, and the history of various titled members of the Lingon family. And Esther, from native delicacy, did not lead to more recent topics of a personal kind. She was copiously instructed that the Lingon family was better than that even of the elder Transomes, and was privileged with an explanation of the various quarterings, which proved that the Lingon blood had been continually enriched. Poor Mrs. Transome, with her secret bitterness and dread, still found a flavor in this sort of pride; none the less because certain deeds of her own life had been in fatal inconsistency with it. Besides, genealogies entered into her stock of ideas, and her talk on such subjects was as necessary as the notes of the linnet or the blackbird. She had no ultimate analysis of things that went beyond blood and family — the Herons of Fenshore or the Badgers of Hillbury. She had never seen behind the canvas with which her life was hung. In the dim background there was the burning mount and the tables of the law; in the foreground there was Lady Debarry privately gossiping about her, and Lady Wyvern finally deciding not to send her invitations to dinner. Unlike that Semiramis who made laws to suit her practical license, she lived, poor soul, in the midst of desecrated sanctities, and of honors that looked tarnished in the light of monotonous and weary suns. Glimpses of the Lingon heraldry in their freshness were interesting to Esther; but it occurred to her that when she had known about them a good while they would cease to be succulent themes of converse or meditation, and Mrs. Transome, having known them all along, might have felt a vacuum in spite of them.

Nevertheless it was entertaining at present to be seated on soft cushions with her netting before her, while Mrs. Transome went on with her embroidery, and told in that easy phrase, and with that refined high-bred tone and accent which she possessed in perfection, family stories that to Esther were like so many novelettes: what diamonds were in the Earl's family, own cousins to Mrs. Transome; how poor Lady Sara's husband went off into jealous madness only a month after their marriage, and dragged that sweet blue-eyed thing by the hair; and how the brilliant Fanny, having married a country parson, became so niggardly that she had gone about almost begging for fresh eggs from the farmers' wives, though she had done very well with her six sons, as there was a bishop and no end of interest in the family, and two of them got appointments in India.

At present Mrs. Transome did not touch at all on her own time of privation, or her troubles with her eldest son, or on anything that lay very close to her heart. She conversed with Esther, and acted the part of hostess as she performed her toilet and went on with her embroidery: these things were to be done whether one were happy or miserable. Even the patriarch Job, if he had been a gentleman of the modern West, would have avoided picturesque disorder and poetical laments; and the friends who called on him, though not less disposed than Bildad the Shuhite to hint that their unfortunate friend was in the wrong, would have sat on chairs and held their hats in their hands. The harder problems of our life have changed less than our manners; we wrestle with the old sorrows, but more decorously. Esther's inexperience prevented her from divining much about this fine gray-haired woman, whom she could not help perceiving to stand apart from the family group, as if there were some cause of isolation for her both within and without. To her young heart there was a peculiar interest in Mrs. Transome. An elderly woman, whose beauty, position, and graceful kindness towards herself, made deference to her spontaneous, was a new figure in Esther's experience. Her quick light movement was always ready to anticipate what Mrs. Transome wanted; her bright apprehension and silvery speech were always ready to cap Mrs. Transome's narratives or instructions even about doses and liniments, with some lively commentary. She must have behaved charmingly; for one day when she had tripped across the room to put the screen just in the right place, Mrs. Transome said, taking her hand, "My dear, you make me wish I had a daughter!"

That was pleasant; and so it was to be decked by Mrs. Transome's own hands in a set of turquoise ornaments, which became her wonderfully, worn with a white cashmere dress, which was also insisted on. Esther never reflected that there was a double intention in these pretty ways towards her; with young generosity, she was rather preoccupied by the desire to prove that she herself entertained no low triumph in the fact that she had rights prejudicial to this family whose life she was learning. And besides, through all Mrs. Transome's perfect manners there pierced some undefinable indications of a hidden anxiety much deeper than anything she could feel about this affair of the estate—to which she often alluded slightly as a reason for informing Esther of something. It was impossible to mistake her for a happy woman; and young speculation is always stirred by discontent for which there is no obvious cause. When we are older, we take the uneasy eyes and the bitter lips more as a matter of course.

But Harold Transome was more communicative about recent years than his mother was. He thought it well that Esther should know how the fortune of his family had been drained by law expenses, owing to suits mistakenly urged by her family; he spoke of his mother's lonely life and pinched circumstances, of her lack of comfort in her elder son, and of the habit she had consequently acquired of looking at the gloomy side of things. He hinted that she had been accustomed to dictate, and that, as he had left her when he was a boy, she had perhaps indulged the dream that he would come back a boy. She was still sore on the point of his politics. These things could not be helped, but so far as he could, he wished to make the rest of her life as cheerful as possible.

Esther listened eagerly, and took these things to heart. The claim to an inheritance, the sudden discovery of a right to a fortune held by others, was acquiring a very distinct and unexpected meaning for her. Every day she was getting more clearly into her imagination what it would be to abandon her own past, and what she would enter into in exchange for it; what it would be to disturb a long possession, and how difficult it was to fix a point at which the disturbance might begin, so as to be contemplated without pain.

Harold Transome's thoughts turned on the same subject, but accompanied by a different state of feeling and with more definite resolutions. He saw a mode of reconciling all difficulties, which looked pleasanter to him the longer he looked at Esther. When she had been hardly a week in the house,

he had made up his mind to marry her; and it had never entered into that mind that the decision did not rest entirely with his inclination. It was not that he thought slightly of Esther's demands; he saw that she would require considerable attractions to please her, and that there were difficulties to be overcome. She was clearly a girl who must be wooed; but Harold did not despair of presenting the requisite attractions, and the difficulties gave more interest to the wooing than he could have believed. When he had said that he would not marry an Englishwoman, he had always made a mental reservation in favor of peculiar circumstances; and now the peculiar circumstances were come. To be deeply in love was a catastrophe not likely to happen to him; but he was readily amorous. No woman could make him miserable, but he was sensitive to the presence of women, and was kind to them; not with grimaces, like a man of mere gallantry, but beamingly, easily, like a man of genuine good-nature. And each day that he was near Esther, the solution of all difficulties by marriage became a more pleasing prospect; though he had to confess to himself that the difficulties did not diminish on a nearer view, in spite of the flattering sense that she brightened at his approach.

Harold was not one to fail in a purpose for want of assiduity. After an hour or two devoted to business in the morning, he went to look for Esther, and if he did not find her at play with Harry and old Mr. Transome, or chatting with his mother, he went into the drawing-room, where she was usually either seated with a book on her knee and "making a bed for her cheek" with one little hand, while she looked out of the window, or else standing in front of one of the full-length family portraits with an air of rumination. Esther found it impossible to read in these days; her life was a book which she seemed herself to be constructing — trying to make character clear before her, and looking into the ways of destiny.

The active Harold had almost always something definite to propose by way of filling the time: if it were fine, she must walk out with him and see the grounds; and when the snow melted and it was no longer slippery, she must get on horseback and learn to ride. If they stayed indoors, she must learn to play at billiards, or she must go over the house and see the pictures he had had hung anew, or the costumes he had brought from the East, or come into his study and look at the map of the estate, and hear what — if it had remained in his family — he had intended to do in every corner of it in order to make the most of its capabilities.

About a certain time in the morning Esther had learned to expect him. Let every wooer make himself strongly expected; he may succeed by dint of being absent, but hardly in the first instance. One morning Harold found her in the drawing-room, leaning against a console-table, and looking at the full-length portrait of a certain Lady Betty Transome, who had lived a century and a half before, and had the usual charm of ladies in Sir Peter Lely's style.

"Don't move, pray," he said on entering; "you look as if you were standing for your own portrait."

"I take that as an insinuation," said Esther, laughing, and moving towards her seat on an ottoman near the fire, "for I notice almost all the portraits are in a conscious, affected attitude. That fair Lady Betty looks as if she had been drilled into that posture, and had not will enough of her own ever to move again unless she had a little push given to her."

"She brightens up that panel well with her long satin skirt," said Harold, as he followed Esther, "but alive I dare say she would have been less cheerful company."

"One would certainly think that she had just been unpacked from silver paper. Ah, how chivalrous you are!" said Esther, as Harold, kneeling on one knee, held her silken netting-stirrup for her to put her foot through. She had often fancied pleasant scenes in which such homage was rendered to her, and the homage was not disagreeable now it was really come; but, strangely enough, a little darting sensation at that moment was accompanied by the vivid remembrance of some one who had never paid the least attention to her foot. There had been a slight blush, such as often came and went rapidly, and she was silent a moment. Harold naturally believed that it was he himself who was filling the field of vision. He would have liked to place himself on the ottoman near Esther, and behave very much more like a lover; but he took a chair opposite to her at a circumspect distance. He dared not do otherwise. Along with Esther's playful charm she conveyed an impression of personal pride and high spirit which warned Harold's acuteness that in the delicacy of their present position he might easily make a false move and offend her. A woman was likely to be credulous about adoration, and to find no difficulty in referring it to her intrinsic attractions; but Esther was too dangerously quick and critical not to discern the least awkwardness that looked like offering her marriage as a convenient compromise for himself. Before-hand, he might have said that such characteristics as hers

were not lovable in a woman; but, as it was, he found that the hope of pleasing her had a piquancy quite new to him.

"I wonder," said Esther, breaking her silence in her usual light silvery tones — "I wonder whether the woman who looked in that way ever felt any troubles. I see there are two old ones up-stairs in the billiard-room who have only got fat; the expression of their faces is just of the same sort."

"A woman ought never to have any trouble. There should always be a man to guard her from it." (Harold Transome was masculine and fallible; he had incautiously sat down this morning to pay his addresses by talk about nothing in particular; and, clever experienced man as he was, he fell into nonsense.")

"But suppose the man himself got into trouble — you would wish her to mind about that. Or suppose," added Esther, suddenly looking up merrily at Harold, "the man himself was troublesome?"

"Oh, you must not strain probabilities in that way. The generality of men are perfect. Take me, for example."

"You are a perfect judge of sauces," said Esther, who had her triumphs in letting Harold know that she was capable of taking notes.

"That is perfection number one. Pray go on."

"Oh, the catalogue is too long — I should be tired before I got to your magnificent ruby ring and your gloves always of the right color."

"If you would let me tell you your perfections, I should not be tired."

"That is not complimentary; it means that the list is short."

"No; it means that the list is pleasant to dwell upon."

"Pray don't begin," said Esther, with her pretty toss of the head; "it would be dangerous to our good understanding. The person I liked best in the world was one who did nothing but scold me and tell me of my faults."

When Esther began to speak, she meant to do no more than make a remote unintelligible allusion, feeling, it must be owned, a naughty will to flirt and be saucy, and thwart Harold's attempts to be felicitous in compliment. But she had no sooner uttered the words than they seemed to her like a confession. A deep flush spread itself over her face and neck, and the sense that she was blushing went on deepening her color. Harold felt himself unpleasantly illuminated as to a possibility that had never yet occurred to him. His

surprise made an uncomfortable pause, in which Esther had time to feel much vexation.

"You speak in the past tense," said Harold, at last; "yet I am rather envious of that person. I shall never be able to win your regard in the same way. Is it any one at Treby? Because in that case I can inquire about your faults."

"Oh, you know I have always lived among grave people," said Esther, more able to recover herself now she was spoken to. "Before I came home to be with my father I was nothing but a school-girl first, and then a teacher in different stages of growth. People in those circumstances are not usually flattered. But there are varieties in fault-finding. At our Paris school the master I liked best was an old man who stormed at me terribly when I read Racine, but yet showed that he was proud of me."

Esther was getting quite cool again. But Harold was not entirely satisfied; if there was any obstacle in his way, he wished to know exactly what it was.

"That must have been a wretched life for you at Treby," he said, — "a person of your accomplishments."

"I used to be dreadfully discontented," said Esther, much occupied with mistakes she had made in her netting. "But I was becoming less so. I have had time to get rather wise, you know; I am two and twenty."

"Yes," said Harold, rising and walking a few paces backwards and forwards, "you are past your majority; you are empress of your own fortunes — and more besides."

"Dear me," said Esther, letting her work fall, and leaning back against the cushions; "I don't think I know very well what to do with my empire."

"Well," said Harold, pausing in front of her, leaning one arm on the mantelpiece, and speaking very gravely, "I hope that in any case, since you appear to have no near relative who understands affairs, you will confide in me, and trust me with all your intentions as if I had no other personal concern in the matter than a regard for you. I hope you believe me capable of acting as the guardian of your interest, even where it turns out to be inevitably opposed to my own."

"I am sure you have given me reason to believe it," said Esther, with seriousness, putting out her hand to Harold. She had not been left in ignorance that he had had opportunities twice offered of stifling her claims.

Harold raised the hand to his lips, but dared not retain it more than an instant. Still the sweet reliance in Esther's

manner made an irresistible temptation to him. After standing still a moment or two, while she bent over her work, he glided to the ottoman and seated himself close by her, looking at her busy hands.

"I see you have made mistakes in your work," he said, bending still nearer, for he saw that she was conscious, yet not angry.

"Nonsense! you know nothing about it," said Esther, laughing and crushing up the soft silk under her palms. "Those blunders have a design in them."

She looked round, and saw a handsome face very near her. Harold was looking, as he felt, thoroughly enamoured of this bright woman, who was not at all to his preconceived taste. Perhaps a touch of hypothetic jealousy now helped to heighten the effect. But he mastered all indiscretion, and only looked at her as he said, —

"I am wondering whether you have any deep wishes and secrets that I can't guess."

"Pray don't speak of my wishes," said Esther, quite overmastered by this new and apparently involuntary manifestation in Harold; "I could not possibly tell you one at this moment — I think I shall never find them out again. Oh yes," she said, abruptly, struggling to relieve herself from the oppression of unintelligible feelings — "I do know one wish distinctly. I want to go and see my father. He writes me word that all is well with him, but still I want to see him."

"You shall be driven there when you like."

"May I go now — I mean as soon as it is convenient?" said Esther, rising.

"I will give the order immediately, if you wish it," said Harold, understanding that the audience was broken up.

CHAPTER XLI.

He rates me as the merchant does the wares
 He will not purchase—"quality not high!"—
 'Twill lose its color opened to the sun,
 Has no aroma, and, in fine, is naught—
 I barter not for such commodities—
 There is no ratio betwixt sand and gems."
 'Tis wicked judgment! for the soul can grow,
 As embryos, that live and move but blindly,
 Burst from the dark, emerge regenerate,
 And lead a life of vision and of choice.

ESTHER did not take the carriage into Malthouse Lane, but left it to wait for her outside the town; and when she entered the house she put her finger on her lip to Lyddy and ran lightly up-stairs. She wished to surprise her father by this visit, and she succeeded. The little minister was just then almost surrounded by a wall of books, with merely his head peeping above them, being much embarrassed to find a substitute for tables and desks on which to arrange the volumes he kept open for reference. He was absorbed in mastering all those painstaking interpretations of the Book of Daniel, which are by this time well gone to the limbo of mistaken criticism; and Esther, as she opened the door softly, heard him rehearsing aloud a passage in which he declared, with some parenthetical provisos, that he conceived not how a perverse ingenuity could blunt the edge of prophetic explicitness, or how an open mind could fail to see in the chronology of "the little horn" the resplendent lamp of an inspired symbol searching out the germinal growth of an antichristian power.

"You will not like me to interrupt you, father?" said Esther, slyly.

"Ah, my beloved child!" he exclaimed, upsetting a pile of books, and thus unintentionally making a convenient breach in his wall, through which Esther could get up to him and kiss him. "Thy appearing is as a joy despaired of. I had thought of thee as the blinded think of the daylight—which indeed is a thing to rejoice in, like all other good, though we see it not nigh."

"Are you sure you have been as well and comfortable as you said you were in your letters?" said Esther, seating herself close in front of her father, and laying her hand on his shoulder.

"I wrote truly, my dear, according to my knowledge at the time. But to an old memory like mine the present days are but as a little water poured on the deep. It seems now that all has been as usual, except my studies, which have gone somewhat curiously into prophetic history. But I fear you will rebuke me for my negligent apparel," said the little man, feeling in front of Esther's brightness like a bat overtaken by the morning.

"That is Lyddy's fault, who sits crying over her want of Christian assurance instead of brushing your clothes and putting out your clean cravat. She is always saying her righteousness is filthy rags, and really I don't think that is a very strong expression for it. I'm sure it is dusty clothes and furniture."

"Nay, my dear, your playfulness glances too severely on our faithful Lyddy. Doubtless I am myself deficient, in that I do not aid her infirm memory by admonition. But now tell me aught that you have left untold about yourself. Your heart has gone out somewhat towards this family—the old man and the child, whom I had not reckoned of?"

"Yes, father. It is more and more difficult to me to see how I can make up my mind to disturb these people at all."

"Something should doubtless be devised to lighten the loss and the change to the aged father and mother. I would have you in any case seek to temper a vicissitude, which is nevertheless a providential arrangement not to be wholly set aside."

"Do you think, father—do you feel assured that a case of inheritance like this of mine is a sort of providential arrangement that makes a command?"

"I have so held it," said Mr. Lyon, solemnly; "in all my meditations I have so held it. For you have to consider, my dear, that you have been led by a peculiar path, and into experience which is not ordinarily the lot of those who are seated in high places; and what I have hinted to you already in my letters on this head, I shall wish on a future opportunity to enter into more at large."

Esther was uneasily silent. On this great question of her lot she saw doubts and difficulties, in which it seemed as if her father could not help her. There was no illumination for her in this theory of providential arrangement. She said suddenly (what she had not thought of at all suddenly)—

"Have you been again to see Felix Holt, father? You have not mentioned him in your letters."

"I have been since I last wrote, my dear, and I took his

mother with me, who, I fear, made the time heavy to him with her complaints. But afterwards I carried her away to the house of a brother minister at Loamford, and returned to Felix, and then we had much discourse."

"Did you tell him of everything that has happened—I mean about me—about the Transomes?"

"Assuredly I told him, and he listened as one astonished. For he had much to hear, knowing nought of your birth, and that you had any other father than Rufus Lyon. 'Tis a narrative I trust I shall not be called on to give to others; but I was not without satisfaction in unfolding the truth to this young man, who hath wrought himself into my affection strangely—I would fain hope for ends that will be a visible good in his less way-worn life, when mine shall be no longer."

"And you told him how the Transomes had come, and that I was staying at Transome Court?"

"Yes, I told these things with some particularity, as is my wont concerning what hath imprinted itself on my mind."

"What did Felix say?"

"Truly, my dear, nothing desirable to recite," said Mr. Lyon, rubbing his hand over his brow.

"Dear father, he did say something, and you always remember what people say. Pray tell me; I want to know."

"It was a hasty remark, and rather escaped him than was consciously framed. He said, 'Then she will marry Transome; that is what Transome means.'"

"That was all?" said Esther, turning rather pale, and biting her lip with the determination that the tears should not start.

"Yes, we did not go further into that branch of the subject. I apprehend there is no warrant for his seeming prognostic, and I should not be without disquiet if I thought otherwise. For I confess that in your accession to this great position and property, I contemplate with hopeful satisfaction your remaining attached to that body of congregational Dissent, which, as I hold, hath retained most of pure and primitive discipline. Your education and peculiar history would thus be seen to have coincided with a long train of events in making this family property a mean of honoring and illustrating a purer form of Christianity than that which hath unhappily obtained the pre-eminence in this land. I speak, my child, as you know, always in the hope that you will fully join our communion; and this dear wish of my heart—nay, this urgent prayer—would seem to be frus-

trated by your marriage with a man, of whom there is at least no visible indication that he would unite himself to our body."

If Esther had been less agitated, she would hardly have helped smiling at the picture her father's words suggested of Harold Transome "joining the church" in Malthouse Yard. But she was too seriously preoccupied with what Felix had said, which hurt her in a two-edged fashion that was highly significant. First, she was angry with him for daring to say positively whom she would marry; secondly, she was angry at the implication that there was from the first a cool deliberate design in Harold Transome to marry her. Esther said to herself that she was quite capable of discerning Harold Transome's disposition, and judging of his conduct. She felt sure he was generous and open. It did not lower him in her opinion that since circumstances had brought them together he evidently admired her — was in love with her — in short, desired to marry her; and she thought that she discerned the delicacy which hindered him from being more explicit. There is no point on which young women are more easily piqued than this of their sufficiency to judge the men who make love to them. And Esther's generous nature delighted to believe in generosity. All these thoughts were making a tumult in her mind while her father was suggesting the radiance her lot might cast on the cause of congregational Dissent. She heard what he said, and remembered it afterwards, but she made no reply at present, and chose rather to start up in search of a brush — an action which would seem to her father quite a usual sequence with her. It served the purpose of diverting him from a lengthy subject.

"Have you yet spoken with Mr. Transome concerning Mrs. Holt, my dear?" he said, as Esther was moving about the room. "I hinted to him that you would best decide how assistance should be tendered to her."

"No, father, we have not approached the subject. Mr. Transome may have forgotten it, and, for several reasons, I would rather not talk of this — of money matters to him at present. There is money due to me from the Lukyns and the Pendrells."

"They have paid it," said Mr. Lyon, opening his desk. "I have it here ready to deliver to you."

"Keep it, father, and pay Mrs. Holt's rent with it, and do anything else that is wanted for her. We must consider everything temporary now," said Esther, enveloping her

father in a towel, and beginning to brush his auburn fringe of hair, while he shut his eyes in preparation for this pleasant passivity. "Everything is uncertain — what may become of Felix — what may become of us all. Oh dear!" she went on, changing suddenly to laughing merriment, "I am beginning to talk like Lyddy, I think."

"Truly," said Mr. Lyon, smiling, "the uncertainty of things is a text rather too wide and obvious for fruitful application; and to discourse of it is, as one may say, to bottle up the air, and make a present of it to those who are already standing out of doors."

"Do you think," said Esther, in the course of their chat, "that the Treby people know at all about the reasons of my being at Transome Court?"

"I have had no sign thereof; and indeed there is no one, as it appears, who could make the story public. The man Christian is away in London with Mr. Debarry, Parliament now beginning; and Mr. Jermyrn would doubtless respect the confidence of the Transomes. I have not seen him lately. I know nothing of his movements. And so far as my own speech is concerned, and my strict command to Lyddy, I have withheld the means of information even as to your having returned to Transome Court in the carriage, not wishing to give any occasion to solicitous questioning till time hath somewhat inured me. But it hath got abroad that you are there, and is the subject of conjectures, whereof, I imagine, the chief is, that you are gone as companion to Mistress Transome; for some of our friends have already hinted a rebuke to me that I should permit your taking a position so little likely to further your spiritual welfare."

"Now, father, I think I shall be obliged to run away from you, not to keep the carriage too long," said Esther, as she finished her reforms on the minister's toilet. "You look beautiful now, and I must give Lyddy a little lecture before I go."

"Yes, my dear; I would not detain you, seeing that my duties demand me. But take with you this Treatise, which I have purposely selected. It concerns all the main questions between ourselves and the Establishment — government, discipline, State-support. It is seasonable that you should give a nearer attention to these polemics, lest you be drawn aside by the fallacious association of a State Church with elevated rank."

Esther chose to take the volume submissively, rather than

to adopt the ungraceful sincerity of saying that she was unable at present to give her mind to the original functions of a bishop, or the comparative merit of Endowments and Voluntaryism. But she did not run her eyes over the pages during her solitary drive to get a foretaste of the argument, for she was entirely occupied with Felix Holt's prophecy that she would marry Harold Transome.

CHAPTER XLII.

Thou sayst it, and not I; for thou hast done
The ugly deed that made these ugly words.

SOPHOCLES: *Electra*.

Yea, it becomes a man
To cherish memory, where he had delight.
For kindness is the natural birth of kindness.
Whose soul records not the great debt of joy,
Is stamped forever an ignoble man.

SOPHOCLES: *Ajax*.

It so happened that, on the morning of the day when Esther went to see her father, Jermyn had not yet heard of her presence at Transome Court. One fact conducing to keep him in this ignorance was, that some days after his critical interview with Harold — days during which he had been wondering how long it would be before Harold made up his mind to sacrifice the luxury of satisfied anger for the solid advantage of securing fortune and position — he was peremptorily called away by business to the south of England, and was obliged to inform Harold by letter of his absence. He took care also to notify his return; but Harold made no sign in reply. The days passed without bringing him any gossip concerning Esther's visit, for such gossip was almost confined to Mr. Lyon's congregation, her Church pupils, Miss Louisa Jermyn among them, having been satisfied by her father's written statement that she was gone on a visit of uncertain duration. But on this day of Esther's call in Malthouse Yard, the Miss Jermyns in their walk saw her getting into the Transomes' carriage, which they had previously observed to be waiting, and which they now saw bowled along on the road towards Little Treby. It followed that only a few hour later the news reached the astonished ears of Matthew Jermyn.

Entirely ignorant of those converging indications and small links of incident which had raised Christian's conjectures,

and had gradually contributed to put him in possession of the facts; ignorant too of some busy motives in the mind of his obliged servant Johnson; Jermyn was not likely to see at once how the momentous information that Esther was the surviving Bycliffe could possibly have reached Harold. His daughters naturally leaped, as others had done, to the conclusion that the Transomes, seeking a governess for little Harry, had had their choice directed to Esther, and observed that they must have attracted her by a high salary to induce her to take charge of such a small pupil; though of course it was important that his English and French should be carefully attended to from the first. Jermyn, hearing this suggestion, was not without a momentary hope that it might be true, and that Harold was still safely unconscious of having under the same roof with him the legal claimant of the family estate.

But a mind in the grasp of a terrible anxiety is not credulous of easy solutions. The one stay that bears up our hopes is sure to appear frail, and if looked at long will seem to totter. Too much depended on that unconsciousness of Harold's; and although Jermyn did not see the course of things that could have disclosed and combined the various items of knowledge which he had imagined to be his own secret, and therefore his safeguard, he saw quite clearly what was likely to be the result of the disclosure. Not only would Harold Transome be no longer afraid of him, but also, by marrying Esther (and Jermyn at once felt sure of this issue), he would be triumphantly freed from any unpleasant consequences, and could pursue much at his ease the gratification of ruining Matthew Jermyn. The prevision of an enemy's triumphant ease is in any case sufficiently irritating to hatred, and there were reasons why it was peculiarly exasperating here; but Jermyn had not the leisure now for mere fruitless emotion: he had to think of a possible device which might save him from imminent ruin — not an indefinite adversity, but a ruin in detail, which his thoughts painted out with the sharpest, ugliest intensity. A man of sixty, with an unsuspecting wife and daughters capable of shrieking and fainting at a sudden revelation, and of looking at him reproachfully in their daily misery under a shabby lot to which he had reduced them — with a mind and with habits dried hard by the years — with no glimpse of an endurable standing-ground except where he could domineer and be prosperous according to the ambitions of pushing middle-class gentility, — such a man is likely to find the prospect of worldly ruin ghastly enough to drive him

to the most uninviting means of escape. He will probably prefer any private scorn that will save him from public infamy or that will leave him money in his pocket, to the humiliation and hardship of new servitude in old age, a shabby hat and a melancholy hearth, where the firing must be used charily and the women look sad. But though a man may be willing to escape through a sewer, a sewer with an outlet into the dry air is not always at hand. Running away, especially when spoken of as absconding, seems at a distance to offer a good modern substitute for the right of sanctuary; but seen closely, it is often found inconvenient and scarcely possible.

Jermyn, on thoroughly considering his position, saw that he had no very agreeable resources at command. But he soon made up his mind what he would do next. He wrote to Mrs. Transome requesting her to appoint an hour in which he could see her privately: he knew she would understand that it was to be an hour when Harold was not at home. As he sealed the letter, he indulged a faint hope that in this interview he might be assured of Esther's birth being unknown at Transome Court; but in the worst case, perhaps some help might be found in Mrs. Transome. To such uses may tender relations come when they have ceased to be tender! The Hazael's of our world who are pushed on quickly against their preconceived confidence in themselves to do doglike actions by the sudden suggestion of a wicked ambition, are much fewer than those who are led on through the years by the gradual demands of a selfishness which has spread its fibres far and wide through the intricate vanities and sordid cares of an every-day existence.

In consequence of that letter to Mrs. Transome, Jermyn was two days afterwards ushered into the smaller drawing-room at Transome Court. It was a charming little room in its refurbished condition: it had two pretty inlaid cabinets, great china vases with contents that sent forth odors of paradise, groups of flowers in oval frames on the walls, and Mrs. Transome's own portrait in the evening costume of 1800, with a garden in the background. That brilliant young woman looked smilingly down on Mr. Jermyn as he passed in front of the fire; and at present hers was the only gaze in the room. He could not help meeting the gaze as he waited, holding his hat behind him—could not help seeing many memories lit up by it; but the strong bent of his mind was to go on arguing each memory into a claim, and to see in the regard others had for him a merit of his own. There had

been plenty of roads open to him when he was a young man ; perhaps if he had not allowed himself to be determined (chiefly, of course, by the feelings of others, for of what effect would his own feelings have been without them ?) into the road he actually took, he might have done better for himself. At any rate, he was likely at last to get the worst of it, and it was he who had most reason to complain. The fortunate Jason, as we know from Euripides, piously thanked the goddess, and saw clearly that he was not at all obliged to Medea : Jermyn was perhaps not aware of the precedent, but thought out his own freedom from obligation and the indebtedness of others towards him with a native faculty not inferior to Jason's.

Before three minutes had passed, however, as if by some sorcery, the brilliant smiling young woman above the mantelpiece seemed to be appearing at the doorway withered and frosted by many winters, and with lips and eyes from which the smile had departed. Jermyn advanced, and they shook hands, but neither of them said anything by way of greeting. Mrs. Transome seated herself, and pointed to a chair opposite and near her.

"Harold has gone to Loamford," she said, in a subdued tone.

"You had something particular to say to me ?"

"Yes," said Jermyn, with his soft and deferential air.

"The last time I was here I could not take the opportunity of speaking to you. But I am anxious to know whether you are aware of what has passed between me and Harold ?"

"Yes, he has told me everything."

"About his proceedings against me ? and the reason he stopped them ?"

"Yes : have you had notice that he has begun them again ?"

"No," said Jermyn, with a very unpleasant sensation.

"Of course he will now," said Mrs. Transome. "There is no reason in his mind why he should not."

"Has he resolved to risk the estate then ?"

"He feels in no danger on that score. And if there were, the danger doesn't depend on you. The most likely thing is, that he will marry this girl."

"He knows everything then ?" said Jermyn, the expression of his face getting clouded.

"Everything. It's of no use for you to think of mastering him : you can't do it. I used to wish Harold to be fortunate — and he is fortunate," said Mrs. Transome, with intense bitterness. "It's not my star that he inherits."

"Do you know how he came by the information about this girl?"

"No; but she knew it all before we spoke to her. It's no secret."

Jermyn was confounded by this hopeless frustration to which he had no key. Though he thought of Christian, the thought shed no light; but the more fatal point was clear: he held no secret that could help him.

"You are aware that these Chancery proceedings may ruin me?"

"He told me they would. But if you are imagining that I can do anything, dismiss the notion. I have told him as plainly as I dare that I wish him to drop all public quarrel with you, and that you could make an arrangement without scandal. I can do no more. He will not listen to me; he doesn't mind about my feelings. He cares more for Mr. Transome than he does for me. He will not listen to me any more than if I were an old ballad-singer."

"It's very hard on *me*, I know," said Jermyn, in the tone with which a man flings out a reproach.

"I besought you three months ago to bear anything rather than quarrel with him."

"I have not quarrelled with him. It is he who has been always seeking a quarrel with me. I have borne a good deal — more than any one else would. He set his teeth against me from the first."

"He saw things that annoyed him; and men are not like women," said Mrs. Transome. There was a bitter innuendo in that truism.

"It's very hard on me — I know that," said Jermyn, with an intensification of his previous tone, rising and walking a step or two, then turning and laying his hand on the back of the chair. "Of course the law in this case can't in the least represent the justice of the matter. I made a good many sacrifices in times past. I gave up a great deal of fine business for the sake of attending to the family affairs, and in that lawsuit they would have gone to rack and ruin if it hadn't been for me."

He moved away again, laid down his hat, which he had been previously holding, and thrust his hands into his pockets as he returned. Mrs. Transome sat motionless as marble, and almost as pale. Her hands lay crossed on her knees. This man, young, slim, and graceful, with a selfishness which then took the form of homage to her, had at one time kneeled to her and

kissed those hands fervently; and she had thought there was a poetry in such passion beyond any to be found in everyday domesticity.

"I stretched my conscience a good deal in that affair of Bycliffe, as you know perfectly well. I told you everything at the time. I told you I was very uneasy about those witnesses, and about getting him thrown into prison. I know it's the blackest thing anybody could charge me with, if they knew my life from beginning to end; and I should never have done it, if I had not been under an infatuation such as makes a man do anything. What did it signify to me about the loss of the lawsuit? I was a young bachelor—I had the world before me."

"Yes," said Mrs. Transome, in a low tone. "It was a pity you didn't make another choice."

"What would have become of you?" said Jermyn, carried along a climax, like other self-justifiers. "I had to think of you. You would not have liked me to make another choice then."

"Clearly," said Mrs. Transome, with concentrated bitterness, but still quietly; "the greater mistake was mine."

Egoism is usually stupid in a dialogue; but Jermyn's did not make him so stupid that he did not feel the edge of Mrs. Transome's words. They increased his irritation.

"I hardly see that," he replied, with a slight laugh of scorn. "You had an estate and a position to save, to go no farther. I remember very well what you said to me—'A clever lawyer can do anything if he has the will; if it's impossible, he will make it possible. And the property is sure to be Harold's some day. He was a baby then.'"

"I remember most things a little too well: you had better say at once what is your object in recalling them."

"An object that is nothing more than justice. With the relation I stood in, it was not likely I should think myself bound by all the forms that are made to bind strangers. I had often immense trouble to raise the money necessary to pay off debts and carry on the affairs; and, as I said before, I had given up other lines of advancement which would have been open to me if I had not stayed in this neighborhood at a critical time when I was fresh to the world. Anybody who knew the whole circumstances would say that my being hunted and run down on the score of my past transactions with regard to the family affairs, is an abominably unjust and unnatural thing."

Jermyn paused a moment, and then added, "At my time of life . . . and with a family about me—and after what has passed . . . I should have thought there was nothing you would care more to prevent."

"I do care. It makes me miserable. That is the extent of my power—to feel miserable."

"No, it is not the extent of your power. You could save me if you would. It is not to be supposed that Harold would go on against me . . . if he knew the whole truth."

Jermyn had sat down before he uttered the last words. He had lowered his voice slightly. He had the air of one who thought that he had prepared the way for an understanding. That a man with so much sharpness, with so much suavity at command—a man who piqued himself on his persuasiveness towards women,—should behave just as Jermyn did on this occasion, would be surprising, but for the constant experience that temper and selfish insensibility will defeat excellent gifts—will make a sensible person shout when shouting is out of place, and will make a polished man rude when his polish might be of eminent use to him.

As Jermyn, sitting down and leaning forward with an elbow on his knee, uttered his last words—"if he knew the whole truth"—a slight shock seemed to pass through Mrs. Transome's hitherto motionless body, followed by a sudden light in her eyes, as in an animal's about to spring.

"And you expect me to tell him?" she said, not loudly, but yet with a clear metallic ring in her voice.

"Would it not be right for him to know?" said Jermyn, in a more bland and persuasive tone than he had yet used.

Perhaps some of the most terrible irony of the human lot is this of a deep truth coming to be uttered by lips that have no right to it.

"I will never tell him!" said Mrs. Transome, starting up, her whole frame thrilled with a passion that seemed almost to make her young again. Her hands hung beside her clinched tightly, her eyes and lips lost the helpless repressed bitterness of discontent, and seemed suddenly fed with energy. "You reckon up your sacrifices for me: you have kept a good account of them, and it is needful; they are some of them what no one else could guess or find out. But you made your sacrifices when they seemed pleasant to you; when you told me they were your happiness; when you told me that it was I who stooped, and I who bestowed favors."

Jermyn rose too, and laid his hand on the back of the chair. He had grown visibly paler, but seemed about to speak.

"Don't speak!" Mrs. Transome said peremptorily. "Don't open your lips again. You have said enough; I will speak now. I have made sacrifices too, but it was when I knew that they were not my happiness. It was after I saw that I *had* stooped — after I saw that your tenderness had turned into calculation — after I saw that you cared for yourself only, and not for me. I heard your explanations — of your duty in life — of our mutual reputation — of a virtuous young lady attached to you. I bore it; I let everything go; I shut my eyes; I might almost have let myself starve, rather than have scenes of quarrel with the man I had loved, in which I must accuse him of turning my love into a good bargain." There was a slight tremor in Mrs. Transome's voice in the last words, and for a moment she paused; but when she spoke again it seemed as if the tremor had frozen into a cutting icicle. "I suppose if a lover picked one's pocket, there's no woman would like to own it. I don't say I was not afraid of you; I *was* afraid of you, and I know now I was right."

"Mrs. Transome," said Jermyn, white to the lips, "it is needless to say more. I withdraw any words that have offended you."

"You can't withdraw them. Can a man apologize for being a dastard? . . . And I have caused you to strain your conscience, have I? — it is I who have sullied your purity? I should think the demons have more honor — they are not so impudent to one another. I would not lose the misery of being a woman, now I see what can be the baseness of a man. One must be a man — first to tell a woman that her love has made her your debtor, and then ask her to pay you by breaking the last poor threads between her and her son."

"I do not ask it," said Jermyn, with a certain asperity. He was beginning to find this intolerable. The mere brute strength of a masculine creature rebelled. He felt almost inclined to throttle the voice out of this woman.

"You do ask it: it is what you would like. I have had a terror on me lest evil should happen to you. From the first, after Harold came home, I had a horrible dread. It seemed as if murder might come between you — I didn't know what. I felt the horror of his not knowing the truth. I might have been dragged at last, by my own feeling — by my own memory — to tell him all, and make him as well as myself miserable, to save you."

Again there was a slight tremor, as if at the remembrance of womanly tenderness and pity. But immediately she launched forth again.

"But now you have asked me, I will never tell him! Be ruined — no — do something more dastardly to save yourself. If I sinned, my judgment went beforehand — that I should sin for a man like you."

Swiftly upon those last words Mrs. Transome passed out of the room. The softly-padded door closed behind her making no noise, and Jermyn found himself alone.

For a brief space he stood still. Human beings in moments of passionate reproach and denunciation, especially when their anger is on their own account, are never so wholly in the right that the person who has to wince cannot possibly protest against some unreasonableness or unfairness in their outburst. And if Jermyn had been capable of feeling that he had thoroughly merited this infliction, he would not have uttered the words that drew it down on him. Men do not become penitent and learn to abhor themselves by having their backs cut open with the lash; rather, they learn to abhor the lash. What Jermyn felt about Mrs. Transome when she disappeared was, that she was a furious woman — who would not do what he wanted her to do. And he was supported as to his justifiableness by the inward repetition of what he had already said to her; it was right that Harold should know the truth. He did not take into account (how should he?) the exasperation and loathing excited by his daring to urge the plea of right. A man who had stolen the pyx, and got frightened when justice was at his heels, might feel the sort of penitence which would induce him to run back in the dark and lay the pyx where the sexton might find it; but if in doing so he whispered to the Blessed Virgin that he was moved by considering the sacredness of all property, and the peculiar sacredness of the pyx, it is not to be believed that she would like him the better for it. Indeed, one often seems to see why the saints should prefer candles to words, especially from penitents whose skin is in danger. Some salt of generosity would have made Jermyn conscious that he had lost the citizenship which authorized him to plead the right; still more, that his self-vindication to Mrs. Transome would be like the exhibition of a brand-mark, and only show that he was shame-proof. There is heroism even in the circles of hell for fellow-sinners who cling to each other in the fiery whirlwind and never recriminate. But these things, which are easy to discern when they are painted for us on the large canvas of poetic story, become confused and obscure even for well-read gentlemen when their affection

for themselves is alarmed by pressing details of actual experience. If their comparison of instances is active at such times, it is chiefly in showing them that their own case has subtle distinctions from all other cases, which should free them from unmitigated condemnation.

And it was in this way with Matthew Jermyn. So many things were more distinctly visible to him, and touched him more acutely, than the effect of his acts or words on Mrs. Transome's feelings! In fact—he asked, with a touch of something that makes us all akin—was it not preposterous, this excess of feeling on points which he himself did not find powerfully moving? She had treated him most unreasonably. It would have been right for her to do what he had—not asked, but only hinted at in a mild and interrogatory manner. But the clearest and most unpleasant result of the interview was, that this right thing which he desired so much would certainly not be done for him by Mrs. Transome.

As he was moving his arm from the chair-back, and turning to take his hat, there was a boisterous noise in the entrance-hall; the door of the small drawing-room, which had closed without latching, was pushed open, and old Mr. Transome appeared with a face of feeble delight, playing horse to little Harry, who roared and flogged behind him, while Moro yapped in a puppy voice at their heels. But when Mr. Transome saw Jermyn in the room he stood still in the doorway, as if he did not know whether entrance were permissible. The majority of his thoughts were but ravelled threads of the past. The attorney came forward to shake hands with due politeness, but the old man said, with a bewildered look, and in a hesitating way,—

“Mr. Jermyn?—why—why—where is Mrs. Transome?”

Jermyn smiled his way out past the unexpected group; and little Harry, thinking he had an eligible opportunity, turned round to give a parting stroke on the stranger's coat-tails.

CHAPTER XLIII.

Whichever way my days decline,
 I felt and feel, though left alone,
 His being working in mine own,
 The footsteps of his life in mine.

Dear friend, far off, my lost desire
 So far, so near, in woe and weal;
 O, loved the most when most I feel
 There is a lower and a higher!

TENNYSON: *In Memoriam*.

AFTER that morning on which Esther found herself red-dened and confused by the sense of having made a distant allusion to Felix Holt, she felt it impossible that she should even, as she had sometimes intended, speak of him explicitly to Harold, in order to discuss the probabilities as to the issue of his trial. She was certain she could not do it without betraying emotion, and there were very complex reasons in Esther's mind why she could not bear that Harold should detect her sensibility on this subject. It was not only all the fibres of maidenly pride and reserve, of a bashfulness undeniably peculiar towards this man, who, while much older than herself, and bearing the stamp of an experience quite hidden from her imagination, was taking strongly the aspect of a lover—it was not only this exquisite kind of shame which was at work within her: there was another sort of susceptibility in Esther, which her present circumstances tended to encourage, though she had come to regard it as not at all lofty, but rather as something which condemned her to littleness in comparison with a mind she had learned to venerate. She knew quite well that, to Harold Transome, Felix Holt was one of the common people who could come into question in no other than a public light. She had a native capability for discerning that the sense of ranks and degrees has its repulsions corresponding to the repulsions dependent on difference of race and color; and she remembered her own impressions too well not to foresee that it would come on Harold Transome as a shock, if he suspected there had been any love-passages between her and this young man, who to him was of course no more than any other intelligent member of the

working class. "To him," said Esther to herself, with a reaction of her newer, better pride, "who has not had the sort of intercourse in which Felix Holt's cultured nature would have asserted its superiority." And in her fluctuations on this matter, she found herself mentally protesting that, whatever Harold might think, there was a light in which he was vulgar compared with Felix. Felix had ideas and motives which she did not believe that Harold could understand. More than all, there was this test: she herself had no sense of inferiority and just subjection when she was with Harold Transome; there were even points in him for which she felt a touch, not of angry, but of playful scorn; whereas with Felix she had always a sense of dependence and possible illumination. In those large, grave, candid gray eyes of his, love seemed something that belonged to the high enthusiasm of life, such as might now be forever shut out from her.

All the same, her vanity winced at the idea that Harold should discern what, from his point of view, would seem like a degradation of her taste and refinement. She could not help being gratified by all the manifestations from those around her that she was thought thoroughly fitted for a high position — could not help enjoying, with more or less keenness, a rehearsal of that demeanor amongst luxuries and dignities which had often been a part of her day-dreams, and the rehearsal included the reception of more and more emphatic attentions from Harold, and of an effusiveness in his manners, which, in proportion as it would have been offensive if it had appeared earlier, became flattering as the effect of a growing acquaintance and daily contact. It comes in so many forms in this life of ours — the knowledge that there is something sweetest and noblest of which we despair, and the sense of something present that solicits us with an immediate and easy indulgence. And there is a pernicious falsity in the pretence that a woman's love lies above the range of such temptations.

Day after day Esther had an arm offered her, had very beaming looks upon her, had opportunities for a great deal of light, airy talk, in which she knew herself to be charming, and had the attractive interest of noticing Harold's practical cleverness — the masculine ease with which he governed everybody and administered everything about him, without the least harshness, and with a facile good-nature which yet was not weak. In the background, too, there was the ever-present consideration, that if Harold Transome wished to

marry her, and she accepted him, the problem of her lot would be more easily solved than in any other way. It was difficult by any theory of Providence, or consideration of results, to see a course which she could call duty: if something would come and urge itself strongly as pleasure, and save her from the effort to find a clew of principle amid the labyrinthine confusions of right and possession, the promise could not but seem alluring. And yet, this life at Transome Court was *not* the life of her day-dreams: there was dulness already in its ease, and in the absence of high demand; and there was a vague consciousness that the love of this not un-fascinating man who hovered about her gave an air of moral mediocrity to all her prospects. She would not have been able perhaps to define this impression; but somehow or other by this elevation of fortune it seemed that the higher ambition which had begun to spring in her was forever nullified. All life seemed cheapened; as it might seem to a young student who, having believed that to gain a certain degree he must write a thesis in which he would bring his powers to bear with memorable effect, suddenly ascertained that no thesis was expected, but the sum (in English money) of twenty-seven pounds ten shillings and sixpence.

After all, she was a woman, and could not make her own lot. As she had once said to Felix, "A woman must choose meaner things, because only meaner things are offered to her." Her lot is made for her by the love she accepts. And Esther began to think that her lot was being made for her by the love that was surrounding her with the influence of a garden on a summer morning.

Harold, on his side, was conscious that the interest of his wooing was not standing still. He was beginning to think it a conquest, in which it would be disappointing to fail, even if this fair nymph had no claim to the estate. He would have liked — and yet he would not have liked — that just a slight shadow of doubt as to his success should be removed. There was something about Esther that he did not altogether understand. She was clearly a woman that could be governed; she was too charming for him to fear that she would ever be obstinate or interfering. Yet there was a lightning that shot out of her now and then, which seemed the sign of a dangerous judgment; as if she inwardly saw something more admirable than Harold Transome. Now, to be perfectly charming, a woman should not see this.

One fine February day, when already the golden and purple

crocuses were out on the terrace — one of those flattering days which sometimes precede the north-east winds of March, and make believe that the coming spring will be enjoyable — a very striking group, of whom Esther and Harold made a part, came out at mid-day to walk upon the gravel at Transome Court. They did not, as usual, go towards the pleasure-grounds on the eastern side, because Mr. Lingon, who was one of them, was going home, and his road lay through the stone gateway into the park.

Uncle Lingon, who disliked painful confidences, and preferred knowing "no mischief of anybody," had not objected to being let into the important secret about Esther, and was sure at once that the whole affair, instead of being a misfortune, was a piece of excellent luck. For himself, he did not profess to be a judge of women, but she seemed to have all the "points," and to carry herself as well as Arabella did, which was saying a good deal. Honest Jack Lingon's first impressions quickly became traditions, which no subsequent evidence could disturb. He was fond of his sister, and seemed never to be conscious of any change for the worse in her since their early time. He considered that man a beast who said anything unpleasant about the persons to whom he was attached. It was not that he winked; his wide-open eyes saw nothing but what his easy disposition inclined him to see. Harold was a good fellow; a clever chap; and Esther's peculiar fitness for him, under all the circumstances, was extraordinary: it reminded him of something in the classics, though he couldn't think exactly what — in fact, a memory was a nasty uneasy thing. Esther was always glad when the old Rector came. With an odd contrariety to her former niceties she liked his rough attire and careless frank speech; they were something not point device that seemed to connect the life of Transome Court with that rougher, commoner world where her home had been.

She and Harold were walking a little in advance of the rest of the party, who were retarded by various causes. Old Mr. Transome, wrapped in a cloth cloak trimmed with sable, and with a soft warm cap also trimmed with fur on his head, had a shuffling uncertain walk. Little Harry was dragging a toy vehicle, on the seat of which he had insisted on tying Moro, with a piece of scarlet drapery round him, making him look like a barbaric prince in a chariot. Moro, having little imagination, objected to this, and barked with feeble snapishness as the tyrannous lad ran forward, then whirled the

chariot round, and ran back to "Gappa," then came to a dead stop, which upset the chariot, that he might watch Uncle Lingon's water-spaniel run for the hurled stick and bring it in his mouth. Nimrod kept close to his old master's legs, glancing with much indifference at this youthful ardor about sticks — he had "gone through all that;" and Dominic walked by, looking on blandly, and taking care both of young and old. Mrs. Transome was not there.

Looking back and seeing that they were a good deal in advance of the rest, Esther and Harold paused.

"What do you think about thinning the trees over there?" said Harold, pointing with his stick. "I have a bit of a notion that if they were divided into clumps so as to show the oaks beyond, it would be a great improvement. It would give an idea of extent that is lost now. And there might be some very pretty clumps got out of those mixed trees. What do you think?"

"I should think it would be an improvement. One likes a 'beyond' everywhere. But I never heard you express yourself so dubiously," said Esther, looking at him rather archly: "you generally see things so clearly, and are so convinced, that I shall begin to feel quite tottering if I find you in uncertainty. Pray don't begin to be doubtful; it is so infectious."

"You think me a great deal too sure — too confident?" said Harold.

"Not at all. It is an immense advantage to know your own will, when you always mean to have it."

"But suppose I couldn't get it, in spite of meaning?" said Harold, with a beaming inquiry in his eyes.

"Oh then," said Esther, turning her head aside, carelessly, as if she were considering the distant birch-stems, "you would bear it quite easily, as you did your not getting into Parliament. You would know you could get it another time — or get something else as good."

"The fact is," said Harold, moving on a little, as if he did not want to be quite overtaken by the others, "you consider me a fat, fatuous, self-satisfied fellow."

"Oh, there are degrees," said Esther, with a silvery laugh; "you have just as much of those qualities as is becoming. There are different styles. You are perfect in your own."

"But you prefer another style, I suspect. A more submissive, tearful, devout worshipper, who would offer his incense with more trembling."

"You are quite mistaken," said Esther, still lightly. "I

find I am very wayward. When anything is offered to me, it seems that I prize it less, and don't want to have it."

Here was a very balky answer, but in spite of it Harold could not help believing that Esther was very far from objecting to the sort of incense he had been offering just then.

"I have often read that that is in human nature," she went on, "yet it takes me by surprise in myself. I suppose," she added, smiling, "I didn't think of myself as human nature."

"I don't confess to the same waywardness," said Harold. "I am very fond of things that I can get. And I never longed much for anything out of my reach. Whatever I feel sure of getting I like all the better. I think half those priggish maxims about human nature in the lump are no more to be relied on than universal remedies. There are different sorts of human nature. Some are given to discontent and longing, others to securing and enjoying. And let me tell you, the discontented longing style is unpleasant to live with."

Harold nodded with a meaning smile at Esther.

"Oh, I assure you I have abjured all admiration for it," she said, smiling up at him in return.

She was remembering the schooling Felix had given her about her Byronic heroes, and was inwardly adding a third sort of human nature to those varieties which Harold had mentioned. He naturally supposed that he might take the abjuration to be entirely in his own favor. And his face did look very pleasant; she could not help liking him, although he was certainly too particular about sauces, gravies, and wines, and had a way of virtually measuring the value of everything by the contribution it made to his own pleasure. His very good-nature was unsympathetic: it never came from any thorough understanding or deep respect for what was in the mind of the person he obliged or indulged; it was like his kindness to his mother—an arrangement of his for the happiness of others, which, if they were sensible, ought to succeed. And an inevitable comparison which haunted her, showed her the same quality in his political views: the utmost enjoyment of his own advantages was the solvent that blended pride in his family and position, with the adhesion to changes that were to obliterate tradition and melt down en-chased gold heirlooms into plating for the egg-spoons of "the people." It is terrible—the keen bright eye of a woman when it has once been turned with admiration on what is severely true; but then, the severely true rarely comes within its range of vision. Esther had had an unusual illumination;

Harold did not know how, but he discerned enough of the effect to make him more cautious than he had ever been in his life before. That caution would have prevented him just then from following up the question as to the style of person Esther would think pleasant to live with, even if Uncle Lingon had not joined them, as he did, to talk about sougning tiles; saying presently that he should turn across the grass and get on to the Home Farm, to have a look at the improvements that Harold was making with such racing speed.

"But you know, lad," said the Rector, as they paused at the expected parting, "you can't do everything in a hurry. The wheat must have time to grow, even when you've reformed all us old Tories off the face of the ground. Dash it! now the election's over: I'm an old Tory again. You see, Harold, a Radical won't do for the county. At another election, you must be on the lookout for a borough where they want a bit of blood. I should have liked you uncommonly to stand for the county; and a Radical of good family squares well enough with a new-fashioned Tory like young Debarry; but you see, these riots — it's been a nasty business. I shall have my hair combed at the sessions for a year to come. But, heyday! What dame is this, with a small boy? — not one of my parishioners?"

Harold and Esther turned, and saw an elderly woman advancing, with a tiny red-haired boy, scantily attired as to his jacket, which merged into a small sparrow-tail a little higher than his waist, but muffled as to his throat with a blue woollen comforter. Esther recognized the pair too well, and felt very uncomfortable. We are so pitiable in subjection to all sorts of vanity — even the very vanities we are practically renouncing! And in spite of the almost solemn memories connected with Mrs. Holt, Esther's first shudder was raised by the idea of what things this woman would say, and by the mortification of having Felix in any way represented by his mother.

As Mrs. Holt advanced into closer observation, it became more evident that she was attired with a view not to charm the eye, but rather to afflict it with all that expression of woe which belongs to very rusty bombazine and the limpest state of false hair. Still, she was not a woman to lose the sense of her own value, or become abject in her manners under any circumstances of depression; and she had a peculiar sense on the present occasion that she was justly relying on the force of her own character and judgment, in independence of anything that Mr. Lyon or the masterful Felix would have

said, if she had thought them worthy to know of her undertaking. She courtesied once, as if to the entire group, now including even the dogs, who showed various degrees of curiosity, especially as to what kind of game the smaller animal Job might prove to be after due investigation; and then she proceeded at once towards Esther, who, in spite of her annoyance, took her arm from Harold's, said, "How do you do, Mrs. Holt?" very kindly, and stooped to pat little Job.

"Yes—you know him, Miss Lyon," said Mrs. Holt in that tone which implies that the conversation is intended for the edification of the company generally; "you know the orphan child, as Felix brought home for me that am his mother to take care of. And it's what I've done—nobody more so—though it's trouble is my reward."

Esther had raised herself again, to stand in helpless endurance of whatever might be coming. But by this time young Harry, struck even more than the dogs by the appearance of Job Tudge, had come round dragging his chariot, and placed himself close to the pale child, whom he exceeded in height and breadth, as well as in depth of coloring. He looked into Job's eyes, peeped round at the tail of his jacket and pulled it a little, and then, taking off the tiny cloth-cap, observed with much interest the tight red curls which had been hidden underneath it. Job looked at his inspector with the round blue eyes of astonishment, until Harry, purely by way of experiment, took a bon-bon from a fantastic wallet which hung over his shoulder, and applied the test to Job's lips. The result was satisfactory to both. Every one had been watching this small comedy, and when Job crunched the bon-bon while Harry looked down at him inquiringly and patted his back, there was general laughter except on the part of Mrs. Holt, who was shaking her head slowly, and slapping the back of her left hand with the painful patience of a tragedian whose part is in abeyance to an ill-timed introduction of the humorous.

"I hope Job's cough has been better lately," said Esther, in mere uncertainty as to what it would be desirable to say or do.

"I dare say you hope so, Miss Lyon," said Mrs. Holt, looking at the distant landscape. "I've no reason to disbelieve but what you wish well to the child, and to Felix, and to me. I'm sure nobody has any occasion to wish me otherways. My character will bear inquiry, and what you, as are young, don't know, others can tell you. That was what I said to myself when I made up mind to come here and see you, and ask you

to get me the freedom to speak to Mr. Transome. I said, whatever Miss Lyon may be now, in the way of being lifted up among great people, she's our minister's daughter, and was not above coming to my house and walking with my son Felix — though I'll not deny he made that figure on the Lord's Day, that'll perhaps go against him with the judge, if anybody thinks well to tell him."

Here Mrs. Holt paused a moment, as with a mind arrested by the painful image it had called up.

Esther's face was glowing, when Harold glanced at her; and seeing this, he was considerate enough to address Mrs. Holt instead of her.

"You are then the mother of the unfortunate young man who is in prison?"

"Indeed I am, sir," said Mrs. Holt, feeling that she was now in deep water. "It's not likely I should claim him if he wasn't my own; though it's not by my will, nor my advice, sir, that he ever walked; for I gave him none but good. But if everybody's son was guided by their mothers, the world 'ud be different; my son is not worse than many another woman's son, and that in Treby, whatever they may say as haven't got their sons in prison. And as to his giving up the doctoring, and then stopping his father's medicines, I know it's bad — that I know — but it's me has had to suffer, and it's me a king and Parliament 'ud consider, if they meant to do the right thing, and had anybody to make it known to 'em. And as for the rioting and killing the constable — my son said most plain to me he never meant it, and there was his bit of potato-pie for his dinner getting dry by the fire, the whole blessed time as I sat and never knew what was coming on me. And it's my opinion as if great people make elections to get themselves into Parliament, and there's riot and murder to do it, they ought to see it as the widow and the widow's son doesn't suffer for it. I well know my duty: and I read my Bible; and I know in Jude where it's been stained with the dried tulip-leaves this many a year, as you're told not to rail at your betters if they was the devil himself; nor will I; but this I do say, if it's three Mr. Transomes instead of one as is listening to me, as there's them ought to go to the king and get him to let off my son Felix."

This speech, in its chief points, had been deliberately prepared. Mrs. Holt had set her face like a flint, to make the gentry know their duty as she knew hers: her defiant defensive tone was due to the consciousness, not only that she was brave-

ing a powerful audience, but that she was daring to stand on the strong basis of her own judgment in opposition to her son's. Her proposals had been waived off by Mr. Lyon and Felix; but she had long had the feminine conviction that if she could "get to speak" in the right quarter, things might be different. The daring bit of impromptu about the three Mr. Transomes was immediately suggested by a movement of old Mr. Transome to the foreground in a line with Mr. Lingon and Harold: his furred and unusual costume appearing to indicate a mysterious dignity which she must hasten to include in her appeal.

And there were reasons that none could have foreseen, which made Mrs. Holt's remonstrance immediately effective. While old Mr. Transome stared, very much like a waxen image in which the expression is a failure, and the Rector, accustomed to female parishioners and complainants, looked on with a smile in his eyes, Harold said at once, with cordial kindness, —

"I think you are quite right, Mrs. Holt. And for my part, I am determined to do my best for your son, both in the witness-box and elsewhere. Take comfort; if it is necessary, the king shall be appealed to. And rely upon it, I shall bear you in mind as Felix Holt's mother."

Rapid thoughts had convinced Harold that in this way he was best commending himself to Esther.

"Well, sir," said Mrs. Holt, who was not going to pour forth disproportionate thanks, "I am glad to hear you speak so becoming; and if you had been the king himself, I should have made free to tell you my opinion. For the Bible says, the king's favor is towards a wise servant; and it's reasonable to think he'd make all the more account of them as have never been in service, or took wage, which I never did, and never thought of my son doing; and his father left money, meaning otherways, so as he might have been a doctor on horseback at this very minute, instead of being in prison."

"What! was he regularly apprenticed to a doctor?" said Mr. Lingon, who had not understood this before.

"Sir, he was, and most clever, like his father before him, only he turned contrary. But as for harming anybody, Felix never meant to harm anybody but himself and his mother, which he certainly did in respect of his clothes, and taking to be a low working man, and stopping my living respectable, more particular by the pills, which had a sale, as you may be sure they suited people's insides. And what folks can never

have boxes enough of to swallow, I should think you have a right to sell. And there's many and many a text for it, as I've opened on without ever thinking; for if it's true, 'Ask, and you shall have,' I should think it's truer when you're willing to pay for what you have."

This was a little too much for Mr. Lingon's gravity; he exploded, and Harold could not help following him. Mrs. Holt fixed her eyes on the distance, and slapped the back of her left hand again: it might be that this kind of mirth was the peculiar effect produced by forcible truth on high and worldly people who were neither in the Independent nor the General Baptist connection.

"I'm sure you must be tired with your long walk, and little Job too," said Esther, by way of breaking this awkward scene. "Aren't you, Job?" she added, stooping to caress the child, who was timidly shrinking from Harry's invitation to him to pull the little chariot — Harry's view being that Job would make a good horse for him to beat, and would run faster than Gappa.

"It's well you can feel for the orphim child, Miss Lyon," said Mrs. Holt, choosing an indirect answer rather than to humble herself by confessing fatigue before gentlemen who seemed to be taking her too lightly. "I didn't believe but what you'd behave pretty, as you always did to me, though everybody used to say you held yourself high. But I'm sure you never did to Felix, for you let him sit by you at the Free School before all the town, and him with never a bit of stock round his neck. And it shows you saw *that* in him worth taking notice of; — and it is but right, if you know my words are true, as you should speak for him to the gentlemen."

"I assure you, Mrs. Holt," said Harold, coming to the rescue — "I assure you that enough has been said to make me use my best efforts for your son. And now, pray, go on to the house with the little boy and take some rest. Dominic, show Mrs. Holt the way, and ask Mrs. Hickes to make her comfortable, and see that somebody takes her back to Treby in the buggy."

"I will go back with Mrs. Holt," said Esther, making an effort against herself.

"No, pray," said Harold, with that kind of entreaty which is really a decision. "Let Mrs. Holt have time to rest. We shall have returned, and you can see her before she goes. We will say good-by for the present, Mrs. Holt."

The poor woman was not sorry to have the prospect of rest

and food, especially for "the orphan child," of whom she was tenderly careful. Like many women who appear to others to have a masculine decisiveness of tone, and to themselves to have a masculine force of mind, and who come into severe collision with sons arrived at the masterful stage, she had the maternal cord vibrating strongly within her towards all tiny children. And when she saw Dominic pick up Job and hoist him on his arm for a little while, by way of making acquaintance, she regarded him with an approval which she had not thought it possible to extend to a foreigner. Since Dominic was going, Harry and old Mr. Transome chose to follow. Uncle Lingon shook hands and turned off across the grass, and thus Esther was left alone with Harold.

But there was a new consciousness between them. Harold's quick perception was least likely to be slow in seizing indications of anything that might affect his position with regard to Esther. Some time before, his jealousy had been awakened to the possibility that before she had known him she had been deeply interested in some one else. Jealousy of all sorts—whether for our fortune or our love—is ready at combinations, and likely even to outstrip the fact. And Esther's renewed confusion, united with her silence about Felix, which now first seemed noteworthy, and with Mrs. Holt's graphic details as to her walking with him and letting him sit by her before all the town, were grounds not merely for a suspicion, but for a conclusion in Harold's mind. The effect of this, which he at once regarded as a discovery, was rather different from what Esther had anticipated. It seemed to him that Felix was the least formidable person that he could have found out as an object of interest antecedent to himself. A young workman who had got himself thrown into prison, whatever recommendations he might have had for a girl at a romantic age in the dreariness of Dissenting society at Treby, could hardly be considered by Harold in the light of a rival. Esther was too clever and tasteful a woman to make a ballad heroine of herself, by bestowing her beauty and her lands on this lowly lover. Besides, Harold cherished the belief that, at the present time, Esther was more wisely disposed to bestow these things on another lover in every way eligible. But in two directions this discovery had a determining effect on him; his curiosity was stirred to know exactly what the relation with Felix had been, and he was solicitous that his behavior with regard to this young man should be such as to enhance his own merit in Esther's eyes. At the same time

he was not inclined to any euphemisms that would seem by any possibility to bring Felix into the lists with himself.

Naturally, when they were left alone, it was Harold who spoke first. "I should think there's a good deal of worth in this young fellow — this Holt, notwithstanding the mistakes he has made. A little queer and conceited, perhaps; but that is usually the case with men of his class when they are at all superior to their fellows."

"Felix Holt is a highly cultivated man; he is not at all conceited," said Esther. "The different kinds of pride within her were coalescing now. She was aware that there had been a betrayal."

"Ah?" said Harold, not quite liking the tone of this answer. "This eccentricity is a sort of fanaticism, then? — this giving up being a doctor on horseback, as the old woman calls it, and taking to — let me see — watchmaking, isn't it?"

"If it is eccentricity to be very much better than other men, he is certainly eccentric; and fanatical too, if it is fanatical to renounce all small selfish motives for the sake of a great and unselfish one. I never knew what nobleness of character really was before I knew Felix Holt."

It seemed to Esther as if, in the excitement of this moment, her own words were bringing her a clearer revelation.

"God bless me!" said Harold, in a tone of surprised yet thorough belief, and looking in Esther's face. "I wish you had talked to me about this before."

Esther at that moment looked perfectly beautiful, with an expression which Harold had never hitherto seen. All the confusion which had depended on personal feeling had given way before the sense that she had to speak the truth about the man whom she felt to be admirable.

"I think I didn't see the meaning of anything fine — I didn't even see the value of my father's character, until I had been taught a little by hearing what Felix Holt said, and seeing that his life was like his words."

Harold looked and listened, and felt his slight jealousy allayed rather than heightened. "This is not like love," he said to himself, with some satisfaction. With all due regard to Harold Transome, he was one of those men who are liable to make the greater mistakes about a particular woman's feelings, because they pique themselves on a power of interpretation derived from much experience. Experience is enlightening, but with a difference. Experiments on live animals may go on for a long period, and yet the fauna on which they are

made may be limited. There may be a passion in the mind of a woman which precipitates her, not along the path of easy beguilement, but into a great leap away from it. Harold's experience had not taught him this; and Esther's enthusiasm about Felix Holt did not seem to him to be dangerous.

"He's quite an apostolic sort of fellow, then," was the self-quieting answer he gave to her last words. "He didn't look like that; but I had only a short interview with him, and I was given to understand that he refused to see me in prison. I believe he's not very well inclined towards me. But you saw a great deal of him, I suppose; and your testimony to any one is enough for me," said Harold, lowering his voice rather tenderly. "Now I know what your opinion is, I shall spare no effort on behalf of such a young man. In fact, I had come to the same resolution before, but your wish would make difficult things easy."

After that energetic speech of Esther's, as often happens, the tears had just suffused her eyes. It was nothing more than might have been expected in a tender-hearted woman, considering Felix Holt's circumstances, and the tears only made more lovely the look with which she met Harold's when he spoke so kindly. She felt pleased with him; she was open to the fallacious delight of being assured that she had power over him to make him do what she liked, and quite forgot the many impressions which had convinced her that Harold had a padded yoke ready for the neck of every man, woman, and child that depended on him.

After a short silence, they were getting near the stone gateway, and Harold said, with an air of intimate consultation, —

"What could we do for this young man, supposing he were let off? I shall send a letter with fifty pounds to the old woman to-morrow. I ought to have done it before, but it really slipped my memory, amongst the many things that have occupied me lately. But this young man — what do you think would be the best thing we could do for him, if he gets at large again? He should be put in a position where his qualities could be more telling."

Esther was recovering her liveliness a little, and was disposed to encourage it for the sake of veiling other feelings, about which she felt renewed reticence, now that the overpowering influence of her enthusiasm was past. She was rather wickedly amused and scornful at Harold's misconceptions and ill-placed intentions of patronage.

"You are hopelessly in the dark," she said, with a light laugh

and toss of her head. "What would you offer Felix Holt? a place in the Excise? You might as well think of offering it to John the Baptist. Felix has chosen his lot. He means always to be a poor man."

"Means? Yes," said Harold, slightly piqued, "but what a man means usually depends on what happens. I mean to be a commoner; but a peerage might present itself under acceptable circumstances."

"Oh, there is no sum in proportion to be done there," said Esther, again gayly. "As you are to a peerage so is *not* Felix Holt to any offer of advantage that you could imagine for him."

"You must think him fit for any position — the first in the county."

"No, I don't," said Esther, shaking her head mischievously. "I think him too high for it."

"I see you can be ardent in your admiration."

"Yes, it is my champagne; you know I don't like the other kind."

"That would be satisfactory if one were sure of getting your admiration," said Harold, leading her up to the terrace, and amongst the crocuses, from whence they had a fine view of the park and river. They stood still near the east parapet, and saw the dash of light on the water, and the pencilled shadows of the trees on the grassy lawn.

"Would it do as well to admire you, instead of being worthy to be admired?" said Harold, turning his eyes from that landscape to Esther's face.

"It would be a thing to be put up with," said Esther, smiling at him rather roguishly. "But you are not in that state of self-despair."

"Well, I am conscious of not having those severe virtues that you have been praising."

"That is true. You are quite in another *genre*."

"A woman would not find me a tragic hero."

"Oh no! She must dress for genteel comedy — such as your mother once described to me — where the most thrilling event is the drawing of a handsome check."

"You are a naughty fairy," said Harold, daring to press Esther's hand a little more closely to him, and drawing her down the eastern steps into the pleasure-ground, as if he were unwilling to give up the conversation. "Confess that you are disgusted with my want of romance."

"I shall not confess to being disgusted. I shall ask you to confess that you are not a romantic figure."

"I am a little too stout."

"For romance — yes. At least you must find security for not getting stouter."

"And I don't look languishing enough?"

"Oh yes — rather too much so — at a fine cigar."

"And I am not in danger of committing suicide?"

"No; you are a widower."

Harold did not reply immediately to this last thrust of Esther's. She had uttered it with innocent thoughtlessness from the playful suggestions of the moment; but it was a fact that Harold's previous married life had entered strongly into her impressions about him. The presence of Harry made it inevitable. Harold took this allusion of Esther's as an indication that his quality of widower was a point that made against him; and after a brief silence he said, in an altered, more serious tone, —

"You don't suppose, I hope, that any other woman has ever held the place that you could hold in my life?"

Esther began to tremble a little, as she always did when the love-talk between them seemed getting serious. She only gave the rather stumbling answer, "How so?"

"Harry's mother had been a slave — was bought, in fact."

It was impossible for Harold to preconceive the effect this had on Esther. His natural disqualification for judging of a girl's feelings was heightened by the blinding effect of an exclusive object — which was to assure her that her own place was peculiar and supreme. Hitherto Esther's acquaintance with Oriental love was derived chiefly from Byronic poems, and this had not sufficed to adjust her mind to a new story, where the Giaour concerned was giving her his arm. She was unable to speak; and Harold went on, —

"Though I am close on thirty-five, I never met with a woman at all like you before. There are new eras in one's life that are equivalent to youth — are something better than youth. I was never an aspirant till I knew you."

Esther was still silent.

"Not that I dare to call myself that. I am not so confident a personage as you imagine. I am necessarily in a painful position for a man who has any feeling."

Here at last Harold had stirred the right fibre. Esther's generosity seized at once the whole meaning implied in that last sentence. She had a fine sensibility to the line at which flirtation must cease; and she was now pale, and shaking with feelings she had not yet defined for herself.

"Do not let us speak of difficult things any more now," she said, with gentle seriousness. "I am come into a new world of late, and have to learn life all over again. Let us go in. I must see poor Mrs. Holt again, and my little friend Job."

She paused at the glass door that opened on the terrace, and entered there, while Harold went round to the stables.

When Esther had been up-stairs and descended again into the large entrance-hall, she found its stony spaciousness made lively by human figures extremely unlike the statues. Since Harry insisted on playing with Job again, Mrs. Holt and her orphan, after dining, had just been brought to this delightful scene for a game of hide-and-seek, and for exhibiting the climbing powers of the two pet-squirrels. Mrs. Holt sat on a stool, in singular relief against the pedestal of the Apollo, while Dominic and Denner (otherwise Mrs. Hickes) bore her company; Harry, in his bright red and purple, flitted about like a great tropic bird after the sparrow-tailed Job, who hid himself with much intelligence behind the scagliola pillars and the pedestals; while one of the squirrels perched itself on the head of the tallest statue, and the other was already peeping down from among the heavy stuccoed angels on the ceiling, near the summit of a pillar.

Mrs. Holt held on her lap a basket filled with good things for Job, and seemed much soothed by pleasant company and excellent treatment. As Esther, descending softly and unobserved, leaned over the stone bannisters and looked at the scene for a minute or two, she saw that Mrs. Holt's attention, having been directed to the squirrel which had scampered on to the head of the Silenus carrying the infant Bacchus, had been drawn downward to the tiny babe looked at with so much affection by the rather ugly and hairy gentleman, of whom she nevertheless spoke with reserve as of one who possibly belonged to the Transome family.

"It's most pretty to see its little limbs, and the gentleman holding it. I should think he was amiable by his look; but it was odd he should have his likeness took without any clothes. Was he Transome by name?" (Mrs. Holt suspected that there might be a mild madness in the family.)

Denner, peering and smiling quietly, was about to reply, when she was prevented by the appearance of old Mr. Transome, who since his walk had been having "forty winks" on the sofa in the library, and now came out to look for Harry. He had doffed his fur cap and cloak, but in lying down to sleep he had thrown over his shoulders a soft Oriental scarf

which Harold had given him, and this still hung over his scanty white hair and down to his knees, held fast by his wooden-looking arms and laxly-clasped hands, which fell in front of him.

This singular appearance of an undoubted Transome fitted exactly into Mrs. Holt's thought at the moment. It lay in the probabilities of things that gentry's intellects should be peculiar: since they had not to get their own living, the good Lord might have economized in their case that common-sense which others were so much more in need of; and in the shuffling figure before her she saw a descendant of the gentleman who had chosen to be represented without his clothes — all the more eccentric where there were the means of buying the best. But these oddities "said nothing" in great folks, who were powerful in high quarters all the same. And Mrs. Holt rose and courtesied with a proud respect, precisely as she would have done if Mr. Transome had looked as wise as Lord Burleigh.

"I hope I'm in no way taking a liberty, sir," she began, while the old gentleman looked at her with bland feebleness; "I'm not that woman to sit anywhere out of my own home without inviting and pressing too. But I was brought here to wait, because the little gentleman wanted to play with the orphin child."

"Very glad, my good woman — sit down — sit down," said Mr. Transome, nodding and smiling between his clauses. "Nice little boy. Your grandchild?"

"Indeed, sir, no," said Mrs. Holt, continuing to stand. Quite apart from any awe of Mr. Transome — sitting down, she felt, would be a too great familiarity with her own pathetic importance on this extra and unlooked-for occasion. "It's not me has any grandchild, nor ever shall have, though most fit. But with my only son saying he'll never be married, and in prison besides, and some saying he'll be transported, you may see yourself — though a gentleman — as there isn't much chance of my having grandchildren of my own. And this is old Master Tudge's grandchild, as my own Felix took to for pity because he was sickly and clemm'd, and I was noways against it, being of a tender heart. For I'm a widow myself, and my son Felix, though big, is fatherless, and I know my duty in consequence. And it's to be wished, sir, as others should know it as are more in power and live in great houses, and can ride in a carriage where they will. And if you're the gentleman as is the head of everything — and it's not to

be thought you'd give up to your son as a poor widow's been forced to do — it behoves you to take the part of them as are deserving ; for the Bible says, gray hairs should speak."

"Yes, yes — poor woman — what shall I say?" said old Mr. Transome, feeling himself scolded, and as usual desirous of mollifying displeasure.

"Sir, I can tell you what to say fast enough ; for it's what I should say myself if I could get to speak to the king. For I've asked them that know, and they say it's the truth both out of the Bible and in, as the king can pardon anything and anybody. And judging by his countenance on the new signs, and the talk there was a while ago about his being the people's friend, as the minister once said it from the very pulpit — if there's any meaning in words, he'll do the right thing by me and my son, if he's asked proper."

"Yes — a very good man — he'll do anything right," said Mr. Transome, whose own ideas about the king just then were somewhat misty, consisting chiefly in broken reminiscences of George the Third. "I'll ask him anything you like," he added, with a pressing desire to satisfy Mrs. Holt, who alarmed him slightly.

"Then, sir, if you'll go in your carriage and say, This young man, Felix Holt by name, as his father was known the country round, and his mother most respectable — he never meant harm to anybody, and so far from bloody murder and fighting, would part with his victual to them that needed it more — and if you'd get other gentlemen to say the same, and if they're not satisfied to inquire — I'll not believe but what the king 'ud let my son out of prison. Or if it's true he must stand his trial, the king 'ud take care no mischief happened to him. I've got my senses, and I'll never believe as in a country where there's a God above and a king below, the right thing can't be done if great people was willing to do it."

Mrs. Holt, like all orators, had waxed louder and more energetic, ceasing to propel her arguments, and being propelled by them. Poor old Mr. Transome, getting more and more frightened at this severe-spoken woman, who had the horrible possibility to his mind of being a novelty that was to become permanent, seemed to be fascinated by fear, and stood helplessly forgetful that if he liked he might turn round and walk away.

Little Harry, alive to anything that had relation to "Gappa," had paused in his game, and, discerning what he thought a hostile aspect in this naughty black old woman, rushed towards

her and proceeded first to beat her with his mimic jockey's whip, and then, suspecting that her bombazine was not sensitive, to set his teeth in her arm. While Dominic rebuked him and pulled him off, Nimrod began to bark anxiously, and the scene was become alarming even to the squirrels, which scrambled as far off as possible.

Esther, who had been waiting for an opportunity of intervention, now came up to Mrs. Holt, to speak some soothing words; and old Mr. Transome, seeing a sufficient screen between himself and his formidable suppliant, at last gathered courage to turn round and shuffle away with unusual swiftness into the library.

"Dear Mrs. Holt," said Esther, "do rest comforted. I assure you, you have done the utmost that can be done by your words. Your visit has not been thrown away. See how the children have enjoyed it! I saw little Job actually laughing. I think I never saw him do more than smile before." Then turning round to Dominic, she said, "Will the buggy come round to this door?"

This hint was sufficient. Dominic went to see if the vehicle was ready, and Denner, remarking that Mrs. Holt would like to mount it in the inner court, invited her to go back into the housekeeper's room. But there was a fresh resistance raised in Harry by the threatened departure of Job, who had seemed an invaluable addition to the menagerie of tamed creatures; and it was barely in time that Esther had the relief of seeing the entrance-hall cleared so as to prevent any further encounter of Mrs. Holt with Harold, who was now coming up the flight of steps at the entrance.

CHAPTER XLIV.

*I'm sick at heart. The eye of day,
The insistent summer noon, seems pitiless,
Shining in all the barren crevices
Of weary life, leaving no shade, no dark,
Where I may dream that hidden waters lie.*

SHORTLY after Mrs. Holt's striking presentation of herself at Transome Court, Esther went on a second visit to her father. The Loamford Assizes were approaching; it was expected that in about ten days Felix Holt's trial would come on, and some hints in her father's letters had given Esther the

impression that he was taking a melancholy view of the result. Harold Transome had once or twice mentioned the subject with a facile hopefulness as to "the young fellow's coming off easily," which, in her anxious mind, was not a counterpoise to disquieting suggestions, and she had not choosen to introduce another conversation about Felix Holt, by questioning Harold concerning the probabilities he relied on. Since those moments on the terrace, Harold had daily become more of the solicitous and indirectly beseeching lover; and Esther, from the very fact that she was weighed on by thoughts that were painfully bewildering to her — by thoughts which, in their newness to her young mind, seemed to shake her belief that life could be anything else than a compromise with things repugnant to the moral taste — had become more passive to his attentions at the very time that she had begun to feel more profoundly that in accepting Harold Transome she left the high mountain air, the passionate serenity of perfect love forever behind her, and must adjust her wishes to a life of middling delights, overhung with the languorous haziness of motiveless ease, where poetry was only literature, and the fine ideas had to be taken down from the shelves of the library when her husband's back was turned. But it seemed as if all outward conditions concurred, along with her generous sympathy for the Transomes, and with those native tendencies against which she had once begun to struggle, to make this middling lot the best she could attain to. She was in this half-sad half-satisfied resignation to something like what is called worldly wisdom, when she went to see her father, and learn what she could from him about Felix.

The little minister was much depressed, unable to resign himself to the dread which had begun to haunt him, that Felix might have to endure the odious penalty of transportation for the manslaughter, which was the offence that no evidence in his favor could disprove.

"I had been encouraged by the assurances of men instructed in this regard," said Mr. Lyon, while Esther sat on the stool near him, and listened anxiously, "that though he were pronounced guilty in regard to this deed whereinto he hath calamitously fallen, yet that a judge mildly disposed, and with a due sense of that invisible activity of the soul whereby the deeds which are the same in outward appearance and affect, yet differ as the knife-stroke of the surgeon, even though it kill, differs from the knife-stroke of a wanton mutilator, might use his discretion in tempering the punishment."

so that it would not be very evil to bear. But now it is said that the judge who cometh is a severe man, and one nourishing a prejudice against the bolder spirits who stand not in the old paths."

"I am going to be present at the trial, father," said Esther, who was preparing the way to express a wish, which she was timid about even with her father. "I mentioned to Mrs. Transome that I should like to do so, and she said that she used in old days always to attend the assizes, and that she would take me. You will be there, father?"

"Assuredly I shall be there, having been summoned to bear witness to Felix's character, and to his having uttered remonstrances and warnings long beforehand whereby he proved himself an enemy to riot. In our ears, who know him, it sounds strangely that aught else should be credible; but he hath few to speak for him, though I trust that Mr. Harold Transome's testimony will go far, if, as you say, he is disposed to set aside all minor regards, and not to speak the truth grudgingly and reluctantly. For the very truth hath a color from the disposition of the utterer."

"He is kind; he is capable of being generous," said Esther.

"It is well. For I verily believe that evil-minded men have been at work against Felix. The *Duffield Watchman* hath written continually in allusion to him as one of those mischievous men who seek to elevate themselves through the dishonor of their party; and as one of those who go not heart and soul with the needs of the people, but seek only to get a hearing for themselves by raising their voices in crotchety discord. It is these things that cause me heaviness of spirit: the dark secret of this young man's lot is a cross I carry daily."

"Father," said Esther, timidly, while the eyes of both were filling with tears, "I should like to see him again before his trial. Might I? Will you ask him? Will you take me?"

The minister raised his suffused eyes to hers, and did not speak for a moment or two. A new thought had visited him. But his delicate tenderness shrank even from an inward inquiry that was too curious — that seemed like an effort to peep at sacred secrets.

"I see nought against it, my dear child, if you arrived early enough, and would take the elderly lady into your confidence, so that you might descend from the carriage at some suitable place — the house of the Independent minister, for example —

where I could meet and accompany you. I would forewarn Felix, who would doubtless delight to see your face again; seeing that he may go away, and be, as it were, buried from you, even though it may be only in prison, and not —”

This was too much for Esther. She threw her arms round her father's neck and sobbed like a child. It was an unspeakable relief to her after all the pent-up stifling experience, all the inward incommunicable debate of the last few weeks. The old man was deeply moved too, and held his arm close round the dear child, praying silently.

No word was spoken for some minutes, till Esther raised herself, dried her eyes, and with an action that seemed playful, though there was no smile on her face, pressed her handkerchief against her father's cheeks. Then, when she had put her hand in his, he said, solemnly, —

“’Tis a great and mysterious gift, this clinging of the heart, my Esther, whereby it hath often seemed to me that even in the very moment of suffering our souls have the keenest foretaste of heaven. I speak not lightly, but as one who hath endured. And ’tis a strange truth that only in the agony of parting we look into the depths of love.”

So the interview ended, without any question from Mr. Lyon concerning what Esther contemplated as the ultimate arrangement between herself and the Transomes.

After this conversation, which showed him that what happened to Felix touched Esther more closely than he had supposed, the minister felt no impulse to raise the images of a future so unlike anything that Felix would share. And Esther would have been unable to answer any such questions. The successive weeks, instead of bringing her nearer to clearness and decision, had only brought that state of disenchantment belonging to the actual presence of things which have long dwelt in the imagination with all the factitious charms of arbitrary arrangement. Her imaginary mansion had not been inhabited just as Transome Court was; her imaginary fortune had not been attended with circumstances which she was unable to sweep away. She herself, in her Utopia, had never been what she was now — a woman whose heart was divided and oppressed. The first spontaneous offering of her woman's devotion, the first great inspiration of her life, was a sort of vanished ecstasy which had left its wounds. It seemed to her a cruel misfortune of her young life that her best feeling, her most precious dependence, had been called forth just where the conditions were hardest, and that all the easy invitations

of circumstance were towards something which that previous consecration of her longing had made a moral descent for her. It was characteristic of her that she scarcely at all entertained the alternative of such a compromise as would have given her the larger portion of the fortune to which she had a legal claim, and yet have satisfied her sympathy by leaving the Transomes in possession of their old home. Her domestication with this family had brought them into the foreground of her imagination; the gradual wooing of Harold had acted on her with a constant immediate influence that predominated over all indefinite prospects; and a solitary elevation to wealth, which out of Utopia she had no notion how she should manage, looked as chill and dreary as the offer of dignities in an unknown country.

In the ages since Adam's marriage, it has been good for some men to be alone, and for some women also. But Esther was not one of these women: she was intensely of the feminine type, verging neither towards the saint nor the angel. She was "a fair divided excellence, whose fulness of perfection" must be in marriage. And, like all youthful creatures, she felt as if the present conditions of choice were final. It belonged to the freshness of her heart that, having had her emotions strongly stirred by real objects, she never speculated on possible relations yet to come. It seemed to her that she stood at the first and last parting of the ways. And, in one sense, she was under no illusion. It is only in that freshness of our time that the choice is possible which gives unity to life, and makes the memory a temple where all relics and all votive offerings, all worship and all grateful joy, are an unbroken history sanctified by one religion.

CHAPTER XLV.

We may not make this world a paradise
By walking it together with clasped hands
And eyes that meeting feed a double strength.
We must be only joined by pains divine,
Of spirits blent in mutual memories.

It was a consequence of that interview with her father, that when Esther stepped early on a gray March morning into the carriage with Mrs. Transome, to go to the Loamford Assizes, she was full of an expectation that held her lips in trembling

silence, and gave her eyes that sightless beauty which tells that the vision is all within.

Mrs. Transome did not disturb her with unnecessary speech. Of late, Esther's anxious observation had been drawn to a change in Mrs. Transome, shown in many small ways which only women notice. It was not only that when they sat together the talk seemed more of an effort to her: that might have come from the gradual draining away of matter for discourse pertaining to most sorts of companionship, in which repetition is not felt to be as desirable as novelty. But while Mrs. Transome was dressed just as usual, took her seat as usual, trifled with her drugs and had her embroidery before her as usual, and still made her morning greetings with that finished easy politeness and consideration of tone which to rougher people seems like affection, Esther noticed a strange fitfulness in her movements. Sometimes the stitches of her embroidery went on with silent unbroken swiftness for a quarter of an hour, as if she had to work out her deliverance from bondage by finishing a scroll-patterned border; then her hands dropped suddenly and her gaze fell blankly on the table before her, and she would sit in that way motionless as a seated statue, apparently unconscious of Esther's presence, till some thought darting within her seemed to have the effect of an external shock and rouse her with a start, when she looked round hastily like a person ashamed of having slept. Esther, touched with wondering pity at signs of unhappiness that were new in her experience, took the most delicate care to appear inobservant, and only tried to increase the gentle attention that might help to soothe or gratify this uneasy woman. But, one morning, Mrs. Transome had said, breaking rather a long silence, —

"My dear, I shall make this house dull for you. You sit with me like an embodied patience. I am unendurable; I am getting into a melancholy dotage. A fidgety old woman like me is as unpleasant to see as a rook with its wing broken. Don't mind me, my dear. Run away from me without ceremony. Everyone else does, you see. I am part of the old furniture with new drapery."

"Dear Mrs. Transome," said Esther, gliding to the low ottoman close by the basket of embroidery, "do you dislike my sitting with you?"

"Only for your own sake, my fairy," said Mrs. Transome, smiling faintly, and putting her hand under Esther's chin. "Doesn't it make you shudder to look at me?"

"Why will you say such naughty things?" said Esther affectionately. "If you had had a daughter, she would have desired to be with you most when you most wanted cheering. And surely every young woman has something of a daughter's feeling towards an older one who has been kind to her."

"I should like you to be really my daughter," said Mrs. Transome, rousing herself to look a little brighter. "That is something still for an old woman to hope for."

Esther blushed: she had not foreseen this application or words that came from pitying tenderness. To divert the train of thought as quickly as possible, she at once asked what she had previously had in her mind to ask. Before her blush had disappeared she said:—

"Oh, you are so good; I shall ask you to indulge me very much. It is to let us set out very early to Loamford on Wednesday, and put me down at a particular house, that I may keep an engagement with my father. It is a private matter, that I wish no one to know about, if possible. And he will bring me back to you whenever you appoint."

In that way Esther won her end without needing to betray it; and as Harold was already away at Loamford, she was the more secure.

The Independent minister's house, at which she was set down, and where she was received by her father, was in a quiet street not far from the jail. Esther had thrown a dark cloak over the handsomer coverings which Denner had assured her were absolutely required of ladies who sat anywhere near the judge at a great trial; and as the bonnet of that day did not throw the face into high relief, but rather into perspective, a veil drawn down gave her a sufficiently inconspicuous appearance.

"I have arranged all things, my dear," said Mr. Lyon, "and Felix expects us. We will lose no time."

They walked away at once, Esther not asking a question. She had no consciousness of the road along which they passed; she could never remember anything but a dim sense of entering within high walls and going along passages, till they were ushered into a larger space than she expected, and her father said, —

"It is here that we are permitted to see Felix, my Esther. He will presently appear."

Esther automatically took off her gloves and bonnet, as if she had entered the house after a walk. She had lost the complete consciousness of everything except that she was

going to see Felix. She trembled. It seemed to her as if he too would look altered after her new life — as if even the past would change for her and be no longer a steadfast remembrance, but something she had been mistaken about, as she had been about the new life. Perhaps she was growing out of that childhood to which common things have rareness, and all objects look larger. Perhaps from henceforth the whole world was to be meaner for her. The dread concentrated in those moments seemed worse than anything she had known before. It was what the dread of the pilgrim might be who has it whispered to him that the holy places are a delusion, or that he will see them with a soul unstirred and unbelieving. Every minute that passes may be charged with some such crisis in the little inner world of man or woman.

But soon the door opened slightly; some one looked in; then it opened wide, and Felix Holt entered.

"Miss Lyon — Esther!" and her hand was in his grasp.

He was just the same — no, something inexpressibly better, because of the distance and separation, and the half-weary novelties, which made him like the return of morning.

"Take no heed of me, children," said Mr. Lyon. "I have some notes to make, and my time is precious. We may remain here only a quarter of an hour." And the old man sat down at a window with his back to them, writing with his head bent close to the paper.

"You are very pale; you look ill, compared with your old self," said Esther. She had taken her hand away, but they stood still near each other, she looking up at him.

"The fact is, I'm not fond of prison," said Felix, smiling; "but I suppose the best I can hope for is to have a good deal more of it."

"It is thought that in the worst case a pardon may be obtained," said Esther, avoiding Harold Transome's name.

"I don't rely on that," said Felix, shaking his head. "My wisest course is to make up my mind to the very ugliest penalty they can condemn me to. If I can face that, anything less will seem easy. But you know," he went on, smiling at her brightly, "I never went in for fine company and cushions. I can't be very heavily disappointed in that way."

"Do you see things just as you used to do?" said Esther, turning pale as she said it — "I mean — about poverty, and the people you will live among. Has all the misunderstanding and sadness left you just as obstinate?" She tried to smile, but could not succeed.

"What — about the sort of life I should lead if I were free again?" said Felix.

"Yes. I can't help being discouraged for you by all these things that have happened. See how you may fail!" Esther spoke timidly. She saw a peculiar smile, which she knew well, gathering in his eyes. "Ah, I dare say I am silly," she said, deprecatingly.

"No, you are dreadfully inspired," said Felix. "When the wicked Tempter is tired of snarling that word failure in a man's cell, he sends a voice like a thrush to say it for him. See now what a messenger of darkness you are!" He smiled, and took her two hands between his, pressed together as children hold them up in prayer. Both of them felt too solemnly to be bashful. They looked straight into each other's eyes, as angels do when they tell some truth. And they stood in that way while he went on speaking.

"But I'm proof against that word failure. I've seen behind it. The only failure a man ought to fear is failure in cleaving to the purpose he sees to be best. As to just the amount of result he may see from his particular work — that's a tremendous uncertainty: the universe has not been arranged for the gratification of his feelings. As long as a man sees and believes in some great good, he'll prefer working towards that in the way he's best fit for, come what may. I put effects at their minimum, but I'd rather have the minimum of effect, if it's of the sort I care for, than the maximum of effect I don't care for — a lot of fine things that are not to my taste — and if they were, the conditions of holding them while the world is what it is, are such as would jar on me like grating metal."

"Yes," said Esther, in a low tone, "I think I understand that now, better than I used to do." The words of Felix at last seemed strangely to fit her own experience. But she said no more, though he seemed to wait for it a moment or two, looking at her. But then he went on, —

"I don't mean to be illustrious, you know, and make a new era, else it would be kind of you to get a raven and teach it to croak 'failure' in my ears. Where great things can't happen, I care for very small things, such as will never be known beyond a few garrets and workshops. And then, as to one thing I believe in, I don't think I can altogether fail. If there's anything our people want convincing of, it is, that there's some dignity and happiness for a man other than changing his station. That's one of the beliefs I choose to

consecrate my life to. If anybody could demonstrate to me that I was a flat for it, I shouldn't think it would follow that I must borrow money to set up genteelly and order new clothes. That's not a vigorous consequence to my understanding."

They smiled at each other, with the old sense of amusement they had so often had together.

"You are just the same," said Esther.

"And you?" said Felix. "My affairs have been settled long ago. But yours — a great change has come in them — magic at work."

"Yes," said Esther, rather falteringly.

"Well," said Felix, looking at her gravely again, "it's a case of fitness that seems to give a chance sanction to that musty law. The first time I saw you your birth was an immense puzzle to me. However, the appropriate conditions are come at last."

These words seemed cruel to Esther. But Felix could not know all the reasons for their seeming so. She could not speak; she was turning cold and feeling her heart beat painfully.

"All your tastes are gratified now," he went on innocently. "But you'll remember the old pedagogue and his lectures?"

One thought in the mind of Felix was, that Esther was sure to marry Harold Transome. Men readily believe these things of the women who love them. But he could not allude to the marriage more directly. He was afraid of this destiny for her, without having any very distinct knowledge by which to justify his fear to the mind of another. It did not satisfy him that Esther should marry Harold Transome.

"My children," said Mr. Lyon at this moment, not looking round, but only looking close at his watch, "we have just two minutes more." Then he went on writing.

Esther did not speak, but Felix could not help observing now that her hands had turned to a deathly coldness, and that she was trembling. He believed, he knew, that whatever prospects she had, this feeling was for his sake. An overpowering impulse from mingled love, gratitude, and anxiety, urged him to say, —

"I had a horrible struggle, Esther. But you see I was right. There was a fitting lot in reserve for you. But remember you have cost a great price — don't throw what is precious away. I shall want the news that you have a happiness worthy of you."

Esther felt too miserable for tears to come. She looked

helplessly at Felix for a moment, then took her hands from his, and, turning away mutely, walked dreamily towards her father, and said, "Father, I am ready — there is no more to say."

She turned back again, towards the chair where her bonnet lay, with a face quite corpse-like above her dark garment.

"Esther!"

She heard Felix say the word, with an entreating cry, and went towards him with the swift movement of a frightened child towards its protector. He clasped her, and they kissed each other.

She never could recall anything else that happened, till she was in the carriage again with Mrs. Transome.

CHAPTER XLVI.

Why, there are maidens of heroic touch,
And yet they seem like things of gossamer
You'd pinch the life out of, as out of moths.
Oh, it is not loud tones and mouthiness,
'Tis not the arms akimbo and large strides,
That make a woman's force. The thinnest birds,
With softest downy breasts, have passions in them,
And are brave with love.

ESTHER was so placed in the Court, under Mrs. Transome's wing, as to see and hear everything without effort. Harold had received them at the hotel, and had observed that Esther looked ill, and was unusually abstracted in her manner; but this seemed to be sufficiently accounted for by her sympathetic anxiety about the result of a trial in which the prisoner at the bar was a friend, and in which both her father and himself were important witnesses. Mrs. Transome had no reluctance to keep a small secret from her son, and no betrayal was made of that previous "engagement" of Esther's with her father. Harold was particularly delicate and unobtrusive in his attentions to-day: he had the consciousness that he was going to behave in a way that would gratify Esther and win her admiration, and we are all of us made more graceful by the inward presence of what we believe to be a generous purpose; our actions move to a hidden music — "a melody that's sweetly played in tune."

If Esther had been less absorbed by supreme feelings, she would have been aware that she was an object of special

notice. In the bare squareness of a public hall, where there was not one jutting angle to hang a guess or a thought upon, not an image or a bit of color to stir the fancy, and where the only objects of speculation, of admiration, or of any interest whatever, were human beings, and especially the human beings that occupied positions indicating some importance, the notice bestowed on Esther would not have been surprising, even if it had been merely a tribute to her youthful charm, which was well companioned by Mrs. Transome's elderly majesty. But it was due also to whisperings that she was an hereditary claimant of the Transome estates, whom Harold Transome was about to marry. Harold himself had of late not cared to conceal either the fact or the probability: they both tended rather to his honor than his dishonor. And to-day, when there was a good proportion of Trebians present, the whisperings spread rapidly.

The court was still more crowded than on the previous day, when our poor acquaintance Dredge and his two collier companions were sentenced to a year's imprisonment with hard labor, and the more enlightened prisoner, who stole the Debarry's plate, to transportation for life. Poor Dredge had cried, had wished he'd "never heard of a 'lection," and in spite of sermons from the jail chaplain, fell back on the explanation that this was a world in which Spratt and Old Nick were sure to get the best of it; so that in Dredge's case, at least, most observers must have had the melancholy conviction that there had been no enhancement of public spirit and faith in progress from that wave of political agitation which had reached the Sproxtton Pits.

But curiosity was necessarily at a higher pitch to-day, when the character of the prisoner and the circumstances of his offence were of a highly unusual kind. As soon as Felix appeared at the bar, a murmur rose and spread into a loud buzz, which continued until there had been repeated authoritative calls for silence in the Court. Rather singularly, it was now for the first time that Esther had a feeling of pride in him on the ground simply of his appearance. At this moment, when he was the centre of a multitudinous gaze, which seemed to act on her own vision like a broad unmitigated daylight, she felt that there was something pre-eminent in him, notwithstanding the vicinity of numerous gentlemen. No apple-woman would have admired him; not only to feminine minds like Mrs. Tiliot's, but to many minds in coat and waistcoat, there was something dangerous and perhaps unprincipled in

his bare throat and great Gothic head; and his somewhat massive person would doubtless have come out very oddly from the hands of a fashionable tailor of that time. But as Esther saw his large gray eyes looking round calmly and undefiantly, first at the audience generally, and then with a more observant expression at the lawyers and other persons immediately around him, she felt that he bore the outward stamp of a distinguished nature. Forgive her if she needed this satisfaction: all of us—whether men or women—are liable to this weakness of liking to have our preference justified before others as well as ourselves. Esther said inwardly, with a certain triumph, that Felix Holt looked as worthy to be chosen in the midst of this large assembly, as he had ever looked in their *tête-à-tête* under the sombre light of the little parlor in Malthouse Yard.

Esther had felt some relief in hearing from her father that Felix had insisted on doing without his mother's presence; and since to Mrs. Holt's imagination, notwithstanding her general desire to have her character inquired into, there was no greatly consolatory difference between being a witness and a criminal, and an appearance of any kind "before the judge" could hardly be made to suggest anything definite that would overcome the dim sense of unalleviated disgrace, she had been less inclined than usual to complain of her son's decision. Esther had shuddered beforehand at the inevitable farce there would be in Mrs. Holt's testimony. But surely Felix would lose something for want of a witness who could testify to his behavior in the morning before he became involved in the tumult?

"He is really a fine young fellow," said Harold, coming to speak to Esther after a colloquy with the prisoner's solicitor. "I hope he will not make a blunder in defending himself."

"He is not likely to make a blunder," said Esther. She had recovered her color a little, and was brighter than she had been all the morning before.

Felix had seemed to include her in his general glance, but had avoided looking at her particularly. She understood how delicate feeling for her would prevent this, and that she might safely look at him, and towards her father, whom she could see in the same direction. Turning to Harold, to make an observation, she saw that he was looking towards the same point, but with an expression on his face that surprised her.

"Dear me," she said, prompted to speak without any reflec-

tion; "how angry you look! I never saw you look so angry before. It is not my father you are looking at?"

"Oh no! I am angry at something I'm looking away from," said Harold, making an effort to drive back the troublesome demon who would stare out at window. "It's that Jermyn," he added, glancing at his mother as well as Esther. "He will thrust himself under my eyes everywhere since I refused him an interview and returned his letter. I'm determined never to speak to him directly again, if I can help it."

Mrs. Transome heard with a changeless face. She had for some time been watching, and had taken on her marble look of immobility. She said an inward bitter "Of course!" to everything that was unpleasant.

After this Esther soon became impatient of all speech: her attention was riveted on the proceedings of the Court, and on the mode in which Felix bore himself. In the case for the prosecution there was nothing more than a reproduction, with irrelevancies added by witnesses, of the facts already known to us. Spratt had retained consciousness enough, in the midst of his terror, to swear that, when he was tied to the finger-post, Felix was presiding over the actions of the mob. The landlady of the Seven Stars, who was indebted to Felix for rescue from pursuit by some drunken rioters, gave evidence that went to prove his assumption of leadership prior to the assault on Spratt, — remembering only that he had called away her pursuers to "better sport." Various respectable witnesses swore to Felix's "encouragement" of the rioters who were dragging Spratt in King Street; to his fatal assault on Tucker; and to his attitude in front of the drawing-room window at the Manor.

Three other witnesses gave evidence of expressions used by the prisoner, tending to show the character of the acts with which he was charged. Two were Treby tradesmen, the third was a clerk from Duffield. The clerk had heard Felix speak at Duffield; the Treby men had frequently heard him declare himself on public matters; and they all quoted expressions which tended to show that he had a virulent feeling against the respectable shop-keeping class, and that nothing was likely to be more congenial to him than the gutting of retailers' shops. No one else knew — the witnesses themselves did not know fully — how far their strong perception and memory on these points was due to a fourth mind, namely, that of Mr. John Johnson, the attorney, who was nearly related to one of the Treby witnesses, and a familiar

acquaintance of the Duffield clerk. Man cannot be defined as an evidence-giving animal; and in the difficulty of getting up evidence on any subject, there is room for much unrecognized action of diligent persons who have the extra stimulus of some private motive. Mr. Johnson was present in Court to-day, but in a modest, retired situation. He had come down to give information to Mr. Jermy, and to gather information in other quarters, which was well illuminated by the appearance of Esther in company with the Transomes.

When the case for the prosecution closed, all strangers thought that it looked very black for the prisoner. In two instances only Felix had chosen to put a cross-examining question. The first was to ask Spratt if he did not believe that his having been tied to the post had saved him from a probably mortal injury? The second was to ask the tradesman who swore to his having heard Felix tell the rioters to leave Tucker alone and come along with him, whether he had not, shortly before, heard cries among the mob summoning to an attack on the wine-vaults and brewery.

Esther had hitherto listened closely but calmly. She knew that there would be this strong adverse testimony; and all her hopes and fears were bent on what was to come beyond it. It was when the prisoner was asked what he had to adduce in reply that she felt herself in the grasp of that tremor which does not disable the mind, but rather gives keener consciousness of a mind having a penalty of body attached to it.

There was a silence as of night when Felix Holt began to speak. His voice was firm and clear: he spoke with simple gravity, and evidently without any enjoyment of the occasion. Esther had never seen his face look so weary.

"My Lord, I am not going to occupy the time of the Court with unnecessary words. I believe the witnesses for the prosecution have spoken the truth as far as a superficial observation would enable them to do it; and I see nothing that can weigh with the jury in my favor, unless they believe my statement of my own motives, and the testimony that certain witnesses will give to my character and purposes as being inconsistent with my willingly abetting disorder. I will tell the Court in as few words as I can, how I got entangled in the mob, how I came to attack the constable, and how I was led to take a course which seems rather mad to myself, now I look back upon it."

Felix then gave a concise narrative of his motives and conduct on the day of the riot, from the moment when he was

startled into quitting his work by the earlier uproar of the morning. He omitted, of course, his visit to Malthouse Yard, and merely said that he went out to walk again after returning to quiet his mother's mind. He got warned by the story of his experience, which moved him more strongly than ever, now he recalled it in vibrating words before a large audience of his fellow-men. The sublime delight of truthful speech to one who has the great gift of uttering it, will make itself felt even through the pangs of sorrow.

"That is all I have to say for myself, my Lord. I pleaded 'Not guilty' to the charge of Manslaughter, because I know that word may carry a meaning which would not fairly apply to my act. When I threw Tucker down, I did not see the possibility that he would die from a sort of attack which ordinarily occurs in fighting without any fatal effect. As to my assaulting a constable, it was a quick choice between two evils: I should else have been disabled. And he attacked me under a mistake about my intentions. I'm not prepared to say I never would assault a constable where I had more chance of deliberation. I certainly should assault him if I saw him doing anything that made my blood boil: I reverence the law, but not where it is a pretext for wrong, which it should be the very object of law to hinder. I consider that I should be making an unworthy defence, if I let the Court infer from what I say myself, or from what is said by my witnesses, that because I am a man who hate drunken motiveless disorder, or any wanton harm, therefore I am a man who would never fight against authority: I hold it blasphemy to say that a man ought not to fight against authority: there is no great religion and no great freedom that has not done it, in the beginning. It would be impertinent for me to speak of this now, if I did not need to say in my own defence, that I should hold myself the worst sort of traitor if I put my hand either to fighting or disorder — which must mean injury to somebody — if I were not urged to it by what I hold to be sacred feelings, making a sacred duty either to my own manhood or to my fellow-man. And certainly," Felix ended with a strong ring of scorn in his voice, "I never held it a sacred duty to try and get a Radical candidate returned for North Loamshire, by willingly heading a drunken howling mob, whose public action must consist in breaking windows, destroying hard-got produce, and endangering the lives of men and women. I have no more to say, my Lord."

"I foresaw he would make a blunder," said Harold, in a

low voice to Esther. Then, seeing her shrink a little, he feared she might suspect him of being merely stung by the allusion to himself. "I don't mean what he said about the Radical candidate," he added hastily, in correction. "I don't mean the last sentence. I mean that whole peroration of his, which he ought to have left unsaid. It has done him harm with the jury — they won't understand it, or rather will misunderstand it. And I'll answer for it, it has soured the judge. It remains to be seen what we witnesses can say for him, to nullify the effect of what he has said for himself. I hope the attorney has done his best in collecting the evidence: I understand the expense of the witnesses is undertaken by some Liberals at Glasgow and in Lancashire, friends of Holt's. But I suppose your father has told you."

The first witness called for the defence was Mr. Lyon. The gist of his statements was, that from the beginning of September last until the day of election he was in very frequent intercourse with the prisoner: that he had become intimately acquainted with his character and views of life, and his conduct with respect to the election, and that these were totally inconsistent with any other supposition than that his being involved in the riot, and his fatal encounter with the constable, were due to the calamitous failure of a bold but good purpose. He stated further that he had been present when an interview had occurred in his own house between the prisoner and Mr. Harold Transome, who was then canvassing for the representation of North Loamshire. That the object of the prisoner in seeking this interview had been to inform Mr. Transome of treating given in his name to the workmen in the pits and on the canal at Sproxton, and to remonstrate against its continuance; the prisoner fearing that disturbance and mischief might result from what he believed to be the end towards which this treating was directed — namely, the presence of these men on the occasions of the nomination and polling. Several times after this interview, Mr. Lyon said, he had heard Felix Holt recur to the subject therein discussed with expressions of grief and anxiety. He himself was in the habit of visiting Sproxton in his ministerial capacity: he knew fully what the prisoner had done there in order to found a night-school, and was certain that the prisoner's interest in the working men of that district turned entirely on the possibility of converting them somewhat to habits of soberness and to a due care for the instruction of their children. Finally, he stated that the prisoner, in compliance with his request, had been present at

Duffield on the day of the nomination, and had on his return expressed himself with strong indignation concerning the employment of the Sproxton men on that occasion, and what he called the wickedness of hiring blind violence.

The quaint appearance and manner of the little Dissenting minister could not fail to stimulate the peculiar wit of the bar. He was subjected to a troublesome cross-examination, which he bore with wide-eyed shortsighted quietude and absorption in the duty of truthful response. On being asked, rather sneeringly, if the prisoner was not one of his flock? he answered, in that deeper tone which made one of the most effective transitions of his varying voice, —

“Nay — would to God he were! I should then feel that the great virtues and the pure life I have beheld in him were a witness to the efficacy of the faith I believe in and the discipline of the Church whereunto I belong.”

Perhaps it required a larger power of comparison than was possessed by any of that audience to appreciate the moral elevation of an Independent minister who could utter those words. Nevertheless there was a murmur, which was clearly one of sympathy.

The next witness, and the one on whom the interest of the spectators was chiefly concentrated, was Harold Transome. There was a decided predominance of Tory feeling in the Court, and the human disposition to enjoy the infliction of a little punishment on an opposite party, was, in this instance, of a Tory complexion. Harold was keenly alive to this, and to everything else that might prove disagreeable to him in his having to appear in the witness-box. But he was not likely to lose his self-possession, or to fail in adjusting himself gracefully, under conditions which most men would find it difficult to carry without awkwardness. He had generosity and candor enough to bear Felix Holt's proud rejection of his advances without any petty resentment; he had all the susceptibilities of a gentleman; and these moral qualities gave the right direction to his acumen, in judging of the behavior that would best secure his dignity. Everything requiring self-command was easier to him because of Esther's presence; for her admiration was just then the object which this well-tanned man of the world had it most at heart to secure.

When he entered the witness-box he was much admired by the ladies amongst the audience, many of whom sighed a little at the thought of his wrong course in politics. He certainly looked liked a handsome portrait by Sir Thomas Lawrence,

in which that remarkable artist had happily omitted the usual excess of honeyed blandness mixed with alert intelligence, which is hardly compatible with the state of man out of paradise. He stood not far off Felix; and the two Radicals certainly made a striking contrast. Felix might have come from the hands of a sculptor in the later Roman period, when the plastic impulse was stirred by the grandeur of barbaric forms — when rolled collars were not yet conceived, and satin stocks were not.

Harold Transome declared that he had had only one interview with the prisoner: it was the interview referred to by the previous witness, in whose presence and in whose house it was begun. The interview, however, was continued beyond the observation of Mr. Lyon. The prisoner and himself quit-
ted the Dissenting minister's house in Malthouse Yard together, and proceeded to the office of Mr. Jermyn, who was then conducting electioneering business on his behalf. His object was to comply with Holt's remonstrance by inquiring into the alleged proceedings at Sproxtton, and, if possible, to put a stop to them. Holt's language, both in Malthouse Yard and in the attorney's office, was strong: he was evidently indignant, and his indignation turned on the danger of employing ignorant men excited by drink on an occasion of popular concourse. He believed that Holt's sole motive was the prevention of disorder, and what he considered the demoralization of the workmen by treating. The event had certainly justified his remonstrances. He had not had any subsequent opportunities of observing the prisoner; but if any reliance was to be placed on a rational conclusion, it must, he thought, be plain that the anxiety thus manifested by Holt was a guaranty of the statement he had made as to his motives on the day of the riot. His entire impression from Holt's manner in that single interview was, that he was a moral and political enthusiast, who, if he sought to coerce others, would seek to coerce them into a difficult, and perhaps impracticable, scrupulosity.

Harold spoke with as noticeable a directness and emphasis, as if what he said could have no reaction on himself. He had of course not entered unnecessarily into what occurred in Jermyn's office. But now he was subjected to a cross-examination on this subject, which gave rise to some subdued shrugs, smiles, and winks, among county gentlemen.

The questions were directed so as to bring out, if possible, some indication that Felix Holt was moved to his remon-

strance by personal resentment against the political agents concerned in setting on foot the treating at Sproxtton, but such questioning is a sort of target-shooting that sometimes hits about widely. The cross-examining counsel had close connections among the Tories of Loamshire, and enjoyed his business to-day. Under the fire of various questions about Jermyn and the agent employed by him at Sproxtton, Harold got warm, and in one of his replies said, with his rapid sharpness, —

“Mr. Jermyn was my agent then, not now: I have no longer any but hostile relations with him.”

The sense that he had shown a slight heat would have vexed Harold more if he had not got some satisfaction out of the thought that Jermyn heard those words. He recovered his good temper quickly, and when, subsequently, the question came, —

“You acquiesced in the treating of the Sproxtton men, as necessary to the efficient working of the reformed constituency?” Harold replied, with quiet fluency, —

“Yes; on my return to England, before I put up for North Loamshire, I got the best advice from practised agents, both Whig and Tory. They all agreed as to electioneering measures.”

The next witness was Michael Brincey, otherwise Mike Brindle, who gave evidence of the sayings and doings of the prisoner amongst the Sproxtton men. Mike declared that Felix went “uncommon again’ drink, and pitch-and-toss, and quarrelling, and sich,” and was “all for schooling and bringing up the little chaps;” but on being cross-examined, he admitted that he “couldn’t give much account;” that Felix did talk again’ idle folks, whether poor or rich, and that most like he meant the rich, who had “a rights to be idle,” which was what he, Mike, liked himself sometimes, though for the most part he was “a hard-working butty.” On being checked for this superfluous allegation of his own theory and practice, Mike became timidly conscious that answering was a great mystery beyond the reaches of a butty’s soul, and began to err from defect instead of excess. However, he reasserted that what Felix most wanted was, “to get ’em to set up a school for the little chaps.”

With the two succeeding witnesses, who swore to the fact that Felix had tried to lead the mob along Hobb’s Lane instead of towards the Manor, and to the violently threatening character of Tucker’s attack on him, the case for the defence was understood to close.

Meanwhile Esther had been looking on and listening with growing misery, in the sense that all had not been said which might have been said on behalf of Felix. If it was the jury who were to be acted on, she argued to herself, there might have been an impression made on their feeling which would determine their verdict. Was it not constantly said and seen that juries pronounced Guilty or Not Guilty from sympathy for or against the accused? She was too inexperienced to check her own argument by thoroughly representing to herself the course of things: how the counsel for the prosecution would reply, and how the judge would sum up, with the object of cooling down sympathy into deliberation. What she had painfully pressing on her inward vision was, that the trial was coming to an end, and that the voice of right and truth had not been strong enough.

When a woman feels purely and nobly, that ardor of hers which breaks through formulas too rigorously urged on men by daily practical needs, makes one of her most precious influences: she is the added impulse that shatters the stiffening crust of cautious experience. Her inspired ignorance gives a sublimity to actions so incongruously simple, that otherwise they would make men smile. Some of that ardor which has flashed out and illuminated all poetry and history was burning to-day in the bosom of sweet Esther Lyon. In this, at least, her woman's lot was perfect: that the man she loved was her hero; that her woman's passion and her reverence for rarest goodness rushed together in an undivided current. And to-day they were making one danger, one terror, one irresistible impulse for her heart. Her feelings were growing into a necessity for action, rather than a resolve to act. She could not support the thought that the trial would come to an end, that sentence would be passed on Felix, and that all the while something had been omitted which might have been said for him. There had been no witness to tell what had been his behavior and state of mind just before the riot. She must do it. It was possible. There was time. But not too much time. All other agitation became merged in eagerness not to let the moment escape. The last witness was being called. Harold Transome had not been able to get back to her on leaving the witness-box, but Mr. Lingon was close by her. With firm quickness she said to him, —

"Pray tell the attorney that I have evidence to give for the prisoner — lose no time."

"Do you know what you are going to say, my dear?" said Mr. Lingon, looking at her in astonishment.

"Yes — I entreat you, for God's sake," said Esther, in that low tone of urgent beseeching which is equivalent to a cry; and with a look of appeal more penetrating still, "I would rather die than not do it."

The old Rector, always leaning to the good-natured view of things, felt chiefly that there seemed to be an additional chance for the poor fellow who had got himself into trouble. He disputed no farther, but went to the attorney.

Before Harold was aware of Esther's intention she was on her way to the witness-box. When she appeared there, it was as if a vibration, quick as light, had gone through the Court and had shaken Felix himself, who had hitherto seemed impassive. A sort of gleam seemed to shoot across his face, and any one close to him would have seen that his hand, which lay on the edge of the dock, trembled.

At the first moment Harold was startled and alarmed; the next, he felt delight in Esther's beautiful aspect, and in the admiration of the Court. There was no blush on her face: she stood, divested of all personal considerations whether of vanity or shyness. Her clear voice sounded as it might have done if she had been making a confession of faith. She began and went on without query or interruption. Every face looked grave and respectful.

"I am Esther Lyon, the daughter of Mr. Lyon, the Independent minister at Treby, who has been one of the witnesses for the prisoner. I know Felix Holt well. On the day of the election at Treby, when I had been much alarmed by the noises that reached me from the main street, Felix Holt came to call upon me. He knew that my father was away, and he thought that I should be alarmed by the sounds of disturbance. It was about the middle of the day, and he came to tell me that the disturbance was quieted, and that the streets were nearly emptied. But he said he feared that the men would collect again after drinking, and that something worse might happen later in the day. And he was in much sadness at this thought. He stayed a little while, and then he left me. He was very melancholy. His mind was full of great resolutions that came from his kind feeling towards others. It was the last thing he would have done to join in riot or to hurt any man, if he could have helped it. His nature is very noble; he is tender-hearted; he could never have had any intention that was not brave and good."

There was something so naïve and beautiful in this action of Esther's, that it conquered every low or petty suggestion

even in the commonest minds. The three men in that assembly who knew her best — even her father and Felix Holt — felt a thrill of surprise mingling with their admiration. This bright, delicate, beautiful-shaped thing that seemed most like a toy or ornament — some hand had touched the chords, and there came forth music that brought tears. Half a year before, Esther's dread of being ridiculous spread over the surface of her life; but the depth below was sleeping.

Harold Transome was ready to give her his hand and lead her back to her place. When she was there, Felix, for the first time, could not help looking towards her, and their eyes met in one solemn glance.

Afterwards Esther found herself unable to listen so as to form any judgment on what she heard. The acting out of that strong impulse had exhausted her energy. There was a brief pause, filled with a murmur, a buzz, and much coughing. The audience generally felt as if dull weather was setting in again. And under those auspices the counsel for the prosecution got up to make his reply. Esther's deed had its effect beyond the momentary one, but the effect was not visible in the rigid necessities of legal procedure. The counsel's duty of restoring all unfavorable facts to due prominence in the minds of the jurors, had its effect altogether reinforced by the summing-up of the judge. Even the bare discernment of facts, much more their arrangement with a view to inferences, must carry a bias: human impartiality, whether judicial or not, can hardly escape being more or less loaded. It was not that the judge had severe intentions; it was only that he saw with severity. The conduct of Felix was not such as inclined him to indulgent consideration, and, in his directions to the jury, that mental attitude necessarily told on the light in which he placed the homicide. Even to many in the Court who were not constrained by judicial duty, it seemed that though this high regard felt for the prisoner by his friends, and especially by a generous-hearted woman, was very pretty, such conduct as his was not the less dangerous and foolish, and assaulting and killing a constable was not the less an offence to be regarded without leniency.

Esther seemed now so tremulous, and looked so ill, that Harold begged her to leave the Court with his mother and Mr. Lingon. He would come and tell her the issue. But she said, quietly, that she would rather stay; she was only a little overcome by the exertion of speaking. She was inwardly resolved to see Felix to the last moment before he left the Court.

Though she could not follow the address of the counsel or the judge, she had a keen ear for what was brief and decisive. She heard the verdict, "Guilty of manslaughter." And every word uttered by the judge in pronouncing sentence fell upon her like an unforgettable sound that would come back in dreaming and in waking. She had her eyes on Felix, and at the words, "Imprisonment for four years," she saw his lip tremble. But otherwise he stood firm and calm.

Esther gave a start from her seat. Her heart swelled with a horrible sensation of pain; but, alarmed lest she should lose her self-command, she grasped Mrs. Transome's hand, getting some strength from that human contact.

Esther saw that Felix had turned. She could no longer see his face. "Yes," she said, drawing down her veil, "let us go."

CHAPTER XLVII.

*The devil tempts us not — 'tis we tempt him,
Beckoning his skill with opportunity.*

THE more permanent effect of Esther's action in the trial was visible in a meeting which took place the next day in the principal room of the White Hart at Loamford. To the magistrates and other county gentlemen who were drawn together about noon, some of the necessary impulse might have been lacking but for that stirring of heart in certain just-spirited men and good fathers among them, which had been raised to a high pitch of emotion by Esther's maidenly fervor. Among these one of the foremost was Sir Maximus Debarry, who had come to the assizes with a mind, as usual, slightly rebellious under an influence which he never ultimately resisted — the influence of his son. Philip Debarry himself was detained in London, but in his correspondence with his father he had urged him, as well as his uncle Augustus, to keep eyes and interest awake on the subject of Felix Holt, whom, from all the knowledge of the case he had been able to obtain, he was inclined to believe peculiarly unfortunate rather than guilty. Philip had said he was the more anxious that his family should intervene benevolently in this affair, if it were possible, because he understood that Mr. Lyon took the young man's case particularly to heart, and he should always regard himself as obliged to the old preacher. At this superfineness

of consideration Sir Maximus had vented a few "pshaws!" and, in relation to the whole affair, had grumbled that Phil was always setting him to do he didn't know what — always seeming to turn nothing into something by dint of words which hadn't so much substance as a mote behind them. Nevertheless he was coerced; and in reality he was willing to do anything fair or good-natured which had a handle that his understanding could lay hold of. His brother, the Rector, desired to be rigorously just; but he had come to Loamford with a severe opinion concerning Felix, thinking that some sharp punishment might be a wholesome check on the career of a young man disposed to rely too much on his own crude devices.

Before the trial commenced, Sir Maximus had naturally been one of those who had observed Esther with curiosity, owing to the report of her inheritance, and her probable marriage to his once welcome but now exasperating neighbor, Harold Transome; and he had made the emphatic comment — "A fine girl! something thoroughbred in the look of her. Too good for a Radical; that's all I have to say." But during the trial Sir Maximus was wrought into a state of sympathetic ardor that needed no fanning. As soon as he could take his brother by the buttonhole, he said, —

"I tell you what, Gus! we must exert ourselves to get a pardon for this young fellow. Confound it! what's the use of mewing him up for four years? Example? Nonsense. Will there be a man knocked down the less for it? That girl made me cry. Depend upon it, whether she's going to marry Transome or not, she's been fond of Holt — in her poverty you know. She's a modest, brave, beautiful woman. I'd ride a steeplechase, old as I am, to gratify her feelings. Hang it! the fellow's a good fellow if she thinks so. And he threw out a fine sneer, I thought, at the Radical candidate. Depend upon it, he's a good fellow at bottom."

The Rector had not exactly the same kind of ardor, nor was he open to precisely that process of proof which appeared to have convinced Sir Maximus; but he had been so far influenced as to be inclined to unite in an effort on the side of mercy, observing, also, that he "knew Phil would be on that side." And by the co-operation of similar movements in the minds of other men whose names were of weight, a meeting had been determined on to consult about getting up a memorial to the Home Secretary on behalf of Felix Holt. His case had never had the sort of significance that could rouse political partisan-

ship; and such interest as was now felt in him was still more unmixed with that inducement. The gentlemen who gathered in the room at the White Hart were — not as the large imagination of the *North Loomshire Herald* suggested, “of all shades of political opinion,” but — of as many shades as were to be found among the gentlemen of that county.

Harold Transome had been energetically active in bringing about this meeting. Over and above the stings of conscience and a determination to act up to the level of all recognized honorableness, he had the powerful motive of desiring to do what would satisfy Esther. His gradually heightened perception that she had a strong feeling towards Felix Holt had not made him uneasy. Harold had a conviction that might have seemed like fatuity if it had not been that he saw the effect he produced on Esther by the light of his opinions about women in general. The conviction was, that Felix Holt could not be his rival in any formidable sense: Esther's admiration for this eccentric young man was, he thought, a moral enthusiasm, a romantic fervor, which was one among those many attractions quite novel in his own experience; her distress about the trouble of one who had been a familiar object in her former home, was no more than naturally followed from a tender woman's compassion. The place young Holt had held in her regard had necessarily changed its relations now that her lot was so widely changed. It is undeniable, that what most conduced to the quieting nature of Harold's conclusions was the influence on his imagination of the more or less detailed reasons that Felix Holt was a watchmaker, that his home and dress were of a certain quality, that his person and manners — that, in short (for Harold, like the rest of us, had many impressions which saved him the trouble of distinct ideas), Felix Holt was not the sort of man a woman would be likely to be in love with when she was wooed by Harold Transome.

Thus, he was sufficiently at rest on this point not to be exercising any painful self-conquest in acting as the zealous advocate of Felix Holt's cause with all persons worth influencing; but it was by no direct intercourse between him and Sir Maximus that they found themselves in co-operation, for the old baronet would not recognize Harold by more than the faintest bow, and Harold was not a man to expose himself to a rebuff. Whatever he in his inmost soul regarded as nothing more than a narrow prejudice, he could defy, not with airs of importance, but with easy indifference. He could bear most

things good-humoredly where he felt that he had the superiority. The object of the meeting was discussed, and the memorial agreed upon without any clashing. Mr. Lingon was gone home, but it was expected that his concurrence and signature would be given, as well as those of other gentlemen who were absent. The business gradually reached that stage at which the concentration of interest ceases — when the attention of all but a few who are more practically concerned drops off and disperses itself in private chat, and there is no longer any particular reason why everybody stays except that everybody is there. The room was rather a long one, and invited to a little movement: one gentleman drew another aside to speak in an undertone about Scotch bullocks; another had something to say about the North Loamshire Hunt to a friend who was the reverse of good-looking, but who, nevertheless, while listening, showed his strength of mind by giving a severe attention also to his full-length reflection in the handsome tall mirror that filled the space between two windows. And in this way the groups were continually shifting.

But in the meantime there were moving towards this room at the White Hart the footsteps of a person whose presence had not been invited, and who, very far from being drawn thither by the belief that he would be welcome, knew well that his entrance would, to one person at least, be bitterly disagreeable. They were the footsteps of Mr. Jermyn, whose appearance that morning was not less comely and less carefully tended than usual, but who was suffering the torment of a compressed rage, which, if not impotent to inflict pain on another, was impotent to avert evil from himself. After his interview with Mrs. Transome there had been for some reasons a delay of positive procedures against him by Harold, of which delay Jermyn had twice availed himself; first, to seek an interview with Harold, and then to send him a letter. The interview had been refused; and the letter had been returned, with the statement that no communication could take place except through Harold's lawyers. And yesterday Johnson had brought Jermyn the information that he would quickly hear of the proceedings in Chancery being resumed: the watch Johnson kept in town had given him secure knowledge on this head. A doomed animal, with every issue earthed up except that where its enemy stands, must, if it has teeth and fierceness, try its one chance without delay. And a man may reach a point in his life in which his impulses are not distinguished from those of a hunted brute by any capability of

scruples. Our selfishness is so robust and many-clutching, that, well encouraged, it easily devours all sustenance away from our poor little scruples.

Since Harold would not give Jermyn access to him, that vigorous attorney was resolved to take it. He knew all about the meeting at the White Hart, and he was going thither with the determination of accosting Harold. He thought he knew what he should say, and the tone in which he should say it. It would be a vague intimation, carrying the effect of a threat, which should compel Harold to give him a private interview. To any counter-consideration that presented itself in his mind — to anything that an imagined voice might say — the imagined answer arose, "That's all very fine, but I'm not going to be ruined if I can help it — least of all, ruined in that way." Shall we call it degeneration or gradual development — this effect of thirty additional winters on the soft-glancing, versifying young Jermyn?

When Jermyn entered the room at the White Hart he did not immediately see Harold. The door was at the extremity of the room, and the view was obstructed by groups of gentlemen with figures broadened by overcoats. His entrance excited no peculiar observation: several persons had come in late. Only one or two, who knew Jermyn well, were not too much preoccupied to have a glancing remembrance of what had been chatted about freely the day before — Harold's irritated reply about his agent, from the witness-box. Receiving and giving a slight nod here and there, Jermyn pushed his way, looking round keenly, until he saw Harold standing near the other end of the room. The solicitor who had acted for Felix was just then speaking to him, but having put a paper into his hand turned away; and Harold, standing isolated, though at no great distance from others, bent his eyes on the paper. He looked brilliant that morning; his blood was flowing prosperously. He had come in after a ride, and was additionally brightened by rapid talk and the excitement of seeking to impress himself favorably, or at least powerfully, on the minds of neighbors nearer or more remote. He had just that amount of flush which indicates that life is more enjoyable than usual; and as he stood with his left hand caressing his whisker, and his right holding the paper and his riding-whip, his dark eyes running rapidly along the written lines, and his lips reposing in a curve of good-humor which had more happiness in it than a smile, all beholders might have seen that his mind was at ease.

Jermyn walked quickly and quietly close up to him. The two men were of the same height, and before Harold looked round Jermyn's voice was saying, close to his ear, not in a whisper, but in a hard, incisive, disrespectful and yet not loud tone, —

"Mr. Transome, I must speak to you in private."

The sound jarred through Harold with a sensation all the more insufferable because of the revulsion from the satisfied, almost elated, state in which it had seized him. He started and looked round into Jermyn's eyes. For an instant, which seemed long, there was no sound between them, but only angry hatred gathering in the two faces. Harold felt himself going to crush this insolence: Jermyn felt that he had words within him that were fangs to clutch this obstinate strength, and wring forth the blood and compel submission. And Jermyn's impulse was the more urgent. He said, in a tone that was rather lower, but yet harder and more biting, —

"You will repent else — for your mother's sake."

At that sound, quick as a leaping flame, Harold had struck Jermyn across the face with his whip. The brim of the hat had been a defence. Jermyn, a powerful man, had instantly thrust out his hand and clutched Harold hard by the clothes just below the throat, pushing him slightly so as to make him stagger.

By this time everybody's attention had been called to this end of the room, but both Jermyn and Harold were beyond being arrested by any consciousness of spectators.

"Let me go, you scoundrel!" said Harold, fiercely, "or I'll be the death of you."

"Do," said Jermyn, in a grating voice; "*I am your father.*"

In the thrust by which Harold had been made to stagger backward a little, the two men had got very near the long mirror. They were both white; both had anger and hatred in their faces; the hands of both were upraised. As Harold heard the last terrible words he started at a leaping throb that went through him, and in the start turned his eyes away from Jermyn's face. He turned them on the same face in the glass with his own beside it, and saw the hated fatherhood reasserted.

The young strong man reeled with a sick faintness. But in the same moment Jermyn released his hold, and Harold felt himself supported by the arm. It was Sir Maximus Debarry who had taken hold of him.

"Leave the room, sir!" the Baronet said to Jermyn, in a voice of imperious scorn. "This is a meeting of gentlemen."

"Come, Harold," he said, in the old friendly voice, "come away with me."

CHAPTER XLVIII.

'Tis law as steadfast as the throne of Zeus —
Our days are heritors of days gone by.

ÆSCHYLUS: *Agamemnon*.

A LITTLE after five o'clock that day, Harold arrived at Transome Court. As he was winding along the broad road of the park, some parting gleams of the March sun pierced the trees here and there, and threw on the grass a long shadow of himself and the groom riding, and illuminated a window or two of the home he was approaching. But the bitterness in his mind made these sunny gleams almost as odious as an artificial smile. He wished he had never come back to this pale English sunshine.

In the course of his eighteen miles' drive, he had made up his mind what he would do. He understood now, as he had never understood before, the neglected solitariness of his mother's life, the allusions and innuendoes which had come out during the election. But with a proud insurrection against the hardship of an ignominy which was not of his own making, he inwardly said, that if the circumstances of his birth were such as to warrant any man in regarding his character of gentleman with ready suspicion, that character should be the more strongly asserted in his conduct. No one should be able to allege with any show of proof that he had inherited meanness.

As he stepped from the carriage and entered the hall, there were the voice and the trotting feet of little Harry as usual, and the rush to clasp his father's leg and make his joyful puppy-like noises. Harold just touched the boy's head, and then said to Dominic in a weary voice, —

"Take the child away. Ask where my mother is."

Mrs. Transome, Dominic said, was up-stairs. He had seen her go up after coming in from her walk with Miss Lyon, and she had not come down again.

Harold, throwing off his hat and greatcoat, went straight

to his mother's dressing-room. There was still a hope in his mind. He might be suffering simply from a lie. There is much misery created in the world by mere mistake or slander, and he might have been stunned by a lie suggested by such slander. He rapped at his mother's door.

Her voice said immediately, "Come in."

Mrs. Transome was resting in her easy-chair, as she often did between an afternoon walk and dinner. She had taken off her walking-dress and wrapped herself in a soft dressing-gown. She was neither more nor less empty of joy than usual. But when she saw Harold, a dreadful certainty took possession of her. It was as if a long-expected letter, with a black seal, had come at last.

Harold's face told her what to fear the more decisively, because she had never before seen it express a man's deep agitation. Since the time of its pouting childhood and careless youth she had seen only the confident strength and good-humored imperiousness of maturity. The last five hours had made a change as great as illness makes. Harold looked as if he had been wrestling, and had had some terrible blow. His eyes had that sunken look which, because it is unusual, seems to intensify expression.

He looked at his mother as he entered, and her eyes followed him as he moved, till he came and stood in front of her, she looking up at him, with white lips.

"Mother," he said, speaking with a distinct slowness, in strange contrast with his habitual manner, "tell me the truth, that I may know how to act."

He paused a moment, and then said, "Who is my father?"

She was mute: her lips only trembled. Harold stood silent for a few moments, as if waiting. Then he spoke again.

"*He* has said — said it before others — that *he* is my father."

He looked still at his mother. She seemed as if age were striking her with a sudden wand — as if her trembling face were getting haggard before him. She was mute. But her eyes had not fallen; they looked up in helpless misery at her son.

Her son turned away his eyes from her, and left her. In that moment Harold felt hard: he could show no pity. All the pride of his nature rebelled against his sonship.

CHAPTER XLIX.

Nay, falter not — 'tis an assured good
To seek the noblest — 'tis your only good
Now you have seen it; for that higher vision
Poisons all manner choice for ever more.

THAT day Esther dined with old Mr. Transome only. Harold sent word that he was engaged and had already dined, and Mrs. Transome that she was feeling ill. Esther was much disappointed that any tidings Harold might have brought relating to Felix were deferred in this way; and, her anxiety making her fearful, she was haunted by the thought that if there had been anything cheering to tell, he would have found time to tell it without delay. Old Mr. Transome went as usual to his sofa in the library to sleep after dinner, and Esther had to seat herself in the small drawing-room, in a well-lit solitude that was unusually dispiriting to her. Pretty as this room was, she did not like it. Mrs. Transome's full-length portrait, being the only picture there, urged itself too strongly on her attention: the youthful brilliancy it represented saddened Esther by its inevitable association with what she daily saw had come instead of it — a joyless, embittered age. The sense that Mrs. Transome was unhappy, affected Esther more and more deeply as the growing familiarity which relaxed the efforts of the hostess revealed more and more the threadbare tissue of this majestic lady's life. Even the flowers and the pure sunshine and the sweet waters of Paradise would have been spoiled for a young heart, if the bowered walks had been haunted by an Eve gone gray with bitter memories of an Adam who had complained, "The woman . . . she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." And many of us know how, even in our childhood, some blank discontented face on the background of our home, has marred our summer mornings. Why was it, when the birds were singing, when the fields were a garden, and when we were clasping another little hand just larger than our own, there was somebody who found it hard to smile? Esther had got far beyond that childhood to a time and circumstances when this daily presence of elderly dissatisfaction

amidst such outward things as she had always thought must greatly help to satisfy, awaked, not merely vague questioning emotion, but strong determining thought. And now, in these hours since her return from Loamford, her mind was in that state of highly-wrought activity, that large discourse, in which we seem to stand aloof from our own life — weighing impartially our own temptations and the weak desires that most habitually solicit us. "I think I am getting that power Felix wished me to have: I shall soon see strong visions," she said to herself, with a melancholy smile flitting across her face, as she put out the wax lights that she might get rid of the oppressive urgency of walls and upholstery and that portrait smiling with deluded brightness, unwitting of the future.

Just then Dominic came to say that Mr. Harold sent his compliments, and begged that she would grant him an interview in his study. He disliked the small drawing-room: if she would oblige him by going to the study at once, he would join her very soon. Esther went, in some wonder and anxiety. What she most feared or hoped in these moments related to Felix Holt, and it did not occur to her that Harold could have anything special to say to her that evening on other subjects.

Certainly the study was pleasanter than the small drawing-room. A quiet light shone on nothing but greenness and dark wood, and Dominic had placed a delightful chair for her opposite to his master's, which was still empty. All the little objects of luxury around indicated Harold's habitual occupancy; and as Esther sat opposite all these things along with the empty chair which suggested the coming presence, the expectation of his beseeching homage brought with it an impatience and repugnance which she had never felt before. While these feelings were strongly upon her, the door opened and Harold appeared.

He had recovered his self-possession since his interview with his mother: he had dressed and was perfectly calm. He had been occupied with resolute thoughts, determining to do what he knew that perfect honor demanded, let it cost him what it would. It is true he had a tacit hope behind, that it might not cost him what he prized most highly: it is true he had a glimpse even of reward; but it was not less true that he would have acted as he did without that hope or glimpse. It was the most serious moment in Harold Transome's life: for the first time the iron had entered into his

soul, and he felt the hard pressure of our common lot, the yoke of that mighty resistless destiny laid upon us by the acts of other men as well as our own.

When Esther looked at him she relented, and felt ashamed of her gratuitous impatience. She saw that his mind was in some way burdened. But then immediately sprang the dread that he had to say something hopeless about Felix.

They shook hands in silence, Esther looking at him with anxious surprise. He released her hand, but it did not occur to her to sit down, and they both continued standing on the hearth.

"Don't let me alarm you," said Harold, seeing that her face gathered solemnity from his. "I suppose I carry the marks of a past agitation. It relates entirely to troubles of my own — of my own family. No one beyond is involved in them."

Esther wondered still more, and felt still more relenting.

"But," said Harold, after a slight pause, and in a voice that was weighted with new feeling, "it involves a difference in my position with regard to you; and it is on this point that I wished to speak to you at once. When a man sees what ought to be done, he had better do it forthwith. He can't answer for himself to-morrow."

While Esther continued to look at him, with eyes widened by anxious expectation, Harold turned a little, leaned on the mantelpiece, and ceased to look at her as he spoke.

"My feelings drag me another way. I need not tell you that your regard has become very important to me — that if our mutual position had been different — that, in short, you must have seen — if it had not seemed to be a matter of worldly interest, I should have told you plainly already that I loved you, and that my happiness could be complete only if you would consent to marry me."

Esther felt her heart beginning to beat painfully. Harold's voice and words moved her so much that her own task seemed more difficult than she had before imagined. It seemed as if the silence, unbroken by anything but the clicking of the fire, had been long, before Harold turned round towards her again and said, —

"But to-day I have heard something that affects my own position. I cannot tell you what it is. There is no need. It is not any culpability of my own. But I have not just the same unsullied name and fame in the eyes of the world around us, as I believed that I had when I allowed myself to

entertain that wish about you. You are very young, entering on a fresh life with bright prospects—you are worthy of everything that is best. I may be too vain in thinking it was at all necessary; but I take this precaution against myself. I shut myself out from the chance of trying, after to-day, to induce you to accept anything which others may regard as specked and stained by any obloquy, however slight."

Esther was keenly touched. With a paradoxical longing, such as often happens to us, she wished at that moment that she could have loved this man with her whole heart. The tears came into her eyes; she did not speak, but, with an angel's tenderness in her face, she laid her hand on his sleeve. Harold commanded himself strongly, and said, —

"What is to be done now is, that we should proceed at once to the necessary legal measures for putting you in possession of your own, and arranging mutual claims. After that I shall probably leave England."

Esther was oppressed by an overpowering difficulty. Her sympathy with Harold at this moment was so strong, that it spread itself like a mist over all previous thought and resolve. It was impossible now to wound him afresh. With her hand still resting on his arm, she said, timidly, —

"Should you be urged — obliged to go — in any case?"

"Not in every case, perhaps," Harold said, with an evident movement of the blood towards his face; "at least not for long, not for always."

Esther was conscious of the gleam in his eyes. With terror at herself, she said, in difficult haste, "I can't speak. I can't say anything to-night. A great decision has to be made: I must wait — till to-morrow."

She was moving her hand from his arm, when Harold took it reverentially and raised it to his lips. She turned towards her chair, and as he released her hand she sank down on the seat with a sense that she needed that support. She did not want to go away from Harold yet. All the while there was something she needed to know, and yet she could not bring herself to ask it. She must resign herself to depend entirely on his recollection of anything beyond his own immediate trial. She sat helpless under contending sympathies, while Harold stood at some distance from her, feeling more harassed by weariness and uncertainty, now that he had fulfilled his resolve, and was no longer under the excitement of actually fulfilling it.

Esther's last words had forbidden his revival of the subject

that was necessarily supreme with him. But still she sat there, and his mind, busy as to the probabilities of her feeling, glanced over all she had done and said in the later days of their intercourse. It was this retrospect that led him to say at last, —

“You will be glad to hear that we shall get a very powerfully signed memorial to the Home Secretary about young Holt. I think your speaking for him helped a great deal. You made all the men wish what you wished.”

This was what Esther had been yearning to hear and dared not ask, as well from respect for Harold's absorption in his own sorrow, as from the shrinking that belongs to our dearest need. The intense relief of hearing what she longed to hear, affected her whole frame: her color, her expression, changed as if she had been suddenly freed from some torturing constraint. But we interpret signs of emotion as we interpret other signs — often quite erroneously, unless we have the right key to what they signify. Harold did not gather that this was what Esther had waited for, or that the change in her indicated more than he had expected her to feel at this allusion to an unusual act which she had done under a strong impulse.

Besides the introduction of a new subject after very momentous words have passed, and are still dwelling on the mind, is necessarily a sort of concussion, shaking us into a new adjustment of ourselves.

It seemed natural that soon afterward Esther put out her hand and said, “Good-night.”

Harold went to his bedroom on the same level with his study, thinking of the morning with an uncertainty that dipped on the side of hope. This sweet woman, for whom he felt a passion newer than any he had expected to feel, might possibly make some hard things more bearable — if she loved him. If not — well, he had acted so that he could defy any one to say he was not a gentleman.

Esther went up-stairs to her bedroom, thinking that she should not sleep that night. She set her light on a high stand, and did not touch her dress. What she desired to see with undisturbed clearness were things not present: the rest she needed was the rest of a final choice. It was difficult. On each side there was renunciation.

She drew up her blinds, liking to see the gray sky, where there were some veiled glimmerings of moonlight, and the lines of the forever running river, and the bending movement

of the black trees. She wanted the largeness of the world to help her thought. This young creature, who trod lightly backward and forward, and leaned against the window-frame, and shook back her brown curls as she looked at something not visible, had lived hardly more than six months since she saw Felix Holt for the first time. But life is measured by the rapidity of change, the succession of influences that modify the being; and Esther had undergone something little short of an inward revolution. The revolutionary struggle, however, was not quite at an end.

There was something which she now felt profoundly to be the best thing that life could give her. But — if it was to be had at all — it was not to be had without paying a heavy price for it, such as we must pay for all that is greatly good. A supreme love, a motive that gives a sublime rhythm to a woman's life, and exalts habit into partnership with the soul's highest needs, is not to be had where and how she wills: to know that high initiation, she must often tread where it is hard to tread, and feel the chill air, and watch through darkness. It is not true that love makes all things easy: it makes us choose what is difficult. Esther's previous life had brought her into close acquaintance with many negations, and with many positive ills too, not of the acutely painful, but of the distasteful sort. What if she chose the hardship, and had to bear it alone, with no strength to lean upon — no other better self to make a place for trust and joy? Her past experience saved her from illusions. She knew the dim life of the back street, the contact with sordid vulgarity, the lack of refinement for the senses, the summons to a daily task; and the gain that was to make that life of privation something on which she dreaded to turn her back, as if it were heaven — the presence and the love of Felix Holt — was only a quivering hope, not a certainty. It was not in her woman's nature that the hope should not spring within her and make a strong impulse. She knew that he loved her: had he not said how a woman might help a man if she were worthy? and if she proved herself worthy? But still there was the dread that after all she might find herself on the stony road alone, and faint and be weary. Even with the fulfilment of her hope, she knew that she pledged herself to meet high demands.

And on the other side there was a lot where everything seemed easy — but for the fatal absence of those feelings which, now she had once known them, it seemed nothing less

than a fall and a degradation to do without. With a terrible prescience which a multitude of impressions during her stay at Transome Court had contributed to form, she saw herself in a silken bondage that arrested all motive, and was nothing better than a well-cushioned despair. To be restless amidst ease, to be languid among all appliances for pleasure, was a possibility that seemed to haunt the rooms of this house, and wander with her under the oaks and elms of the park. And Harold Transome's love, no longer a hovering fancy with which she played, but become a serious fact, seemed to threaten her with a stifling oppression. The homage of a man may be delightful until he asks straight for love, by which a woman renders homage. Since she and Felix had kissed each other in the prison, she felt as if she had vowed herself away, as if memory lay on her lips like a seal of possession. Yet what had happened that very evening had strengthened her liking for Harold, and her care for all that regarded him: it had increased her repugnance to turning him out of anything he had expected to be his, or to snatching anything from him on the ground of an arbitrary claim. It had even made her dread, as a coming pain, the task of saying anything to him that was not a promise of the utmost comfort under this newly-disclosed trouble of his.

It was already near midnight, but with these thoughts succeeding and returning in her mind like scenes through which she was living, Esther had a more intense wakefulness than any she had known by day. All had been stillness hitherto, except the fitful wind outside. But her ears now caught a sound within — slight, but sudden. She moved near her door, and heard the sweep of something on the matting outside. It came closer, and paused. Then it began again, and seemed to sweep away from her. Then it approached, and paused as it had done before. Esther listened, wondering. The same thing happened again and again, till she could bear it no longer. She opened her door, and in the dim light of the corridor, where the glass above seemed to make a glimmering sky, she saw Mrs. Transome's tall figure pacing slowly, with her cheek upon her hand.

CHAPTER L.

The great question in life is the suffering we cause; and the utmost ingenuity of metaphysics cannot justify the man who has pierced the heart that loved him. — BENJAMIN CONSTANT.

WHEN Denner had gone up to her mistress's room to dress her for dinner, she had found her seated just as Harold had found her, only with eyelids drooping and trembling over slowly-rolling tears — nay, with a face in which every sensitive feature, every muscle, seemed to be quivering with a silent endurance of some agony.

Denner went and stood by the chair a minute without speaking, only laying her hand gently on Mrs. Transome's. At last she said, beseechingly, "Pray, speak, madam. What has happened?"

"The worst, Denner — the worst."

"You are ill. Let me undress you, and put you to bed."

"No, I am not ill. I am not going to die! I shall live — I shall live!"

"What may I do?"

"Go and say I shall not dine. Then you may come back, if you will."

The patient waiting-woman came back and sat by her mistress in motionless silence. Mrs. Transome would not let her dress be touched, and waved away all proffers with a slight movement of her hand. Denner dared not even light a candle without being told. At last, when the evening was far gone, Mrs. Transome said, —

"Go down, Denner, and find out where Harold is, and come back and tell me."

"Shall I ask him to come to you, madam?"

"No; don't dare to do it, if you love me. Come back."

Denner brought word that Mr. Harold was in his study, and that Miss Lyon was with him. He had not dined, but had sent later to ask Miss Lyon to go into his study.

"Light the candles and leave me."

"Mayn't I come again?"

"No. It may be that my son will come to me."

"Mayn't I sleep on the little bed in your bedroom?"

"No, good Denner; I am not ill. You can't help me."

"That's the hardest word of all, madam."

"The time will come — but not now. Kiss me. Now go."

The small quiet old woman obeyed, as she had always done. She shrank from seeming to claim an equal's share in her mistress's sorrow.

For two hours Mrs. Transome's mind hung on what was hardly a hope — hardly more than the listening for a bare possibility. She began to create the sounds that her anguish craved to hear — began to imagine a footfall, and a hand upon the door. Then, checked by continual disappointment, she tried to rouse a truer consciousness by rising from her seat and walking to her window, where she saw streaks of light moving and disappearing on the grass, and heard the sound of bolts and closing doors. She hurried away and threw herself into her seat again, and buried her head in the deafening down of the cushions. There was no sound of comfort for her.

Then her heart cried out within her against the cruelty of this son. When he turned from her in the first moment, he had not had time to feel anything but the blow that had fallen on himself. But afterwards — was it possible that he should not be touched with a son's pity — was it possible that he should not have been visited by some thought of the long years through which she had suffered? The memory of those years came back to her now with a protest against the cruelty that had all fallen on *her*. She started up with a new restlessness from this spirit of resistance. She was not penitent. She had borne too hard a punishment. Always the edge of calamity had fallen on *her*. Who had felt for her? She was desolate. God had no pity, else her son would not have been so hard. What dreary future was there after this dreary past? She, too, looked out into the dim night; but the black boundary of trees and the long line of the river seemed only part of the loneliness and monotony of her life.

Suddenly she saw a light on the stone balustrades of the balcony that projected in front of Esther's window, and the flash of a moving candle falling on a shrub below. Esther was still awake and up. What had Harold told her — what had passed between them? Harold was fond of this young creature, who had been always sweet and reverential to her. There was mercy in her young heart; she might be a daughter who had no impulse to punish and to strike her whom fate had stricken. On the dim loneliness before her she seemed to

see Esther's gentle look; it was possible still that the misery of this night might be broken by some comfort. The proud woman yearned for the caressing pity that must dwell in that young bosom. She opened her door gently, but when she had reached Esther's she hesitated. She had never yet in her life asked for compassion — had never thrown herself in faith on an unproffered love. And she might have gone on pacing the corridor like an uneasy spirit without a goal, if Esther's thought, leaping towards her, had not saved her from the need to ask admission.

Mrs. Transome was walking towards the door when it opened. As Esther saw that image of restless misery, it blent itself by a rapid flash with all that Harold had said in the evening. She divined that the son's new trouble must be one with the mother's long sadness. But there was no waiting. In an instant Mrs. Transome felt Esther's arm round her neck, and a voice saying softly, —

"Oh why didn't you call me before?"

They turned hand and hand into the room, and sat down together on a sofa at the foot of the bed. The disordered gray hair — the haggard face — the reddened eyelids under which the tears seemed to be coming again with pain, pierced Esther to the heart. A passionate desire to soothe this suffering woman came over her. She clung round her again, and kissed her poor quivering lips and eyelids, and laid her young cheek against the pale and haggard one. Words could not be quick or strong enough to utter her yearning. As Mrs. Transome felt that soft clinging, she said, —

"God has some pity on me."

"Rest on my bed," said Esther. "You are so tired. I will cover you up warmly, and then you will sleep."

"No — tell me, dear — tell me what Harold said."

"That he has had some new trouble."

"He said nothing hard about me?"

"No — nothing. He did not mention you."

"I have been an unhappy woman, dear."

"I feared it," said Esther, pressing her gently.

"Men are selfish. They are selfish and cruel. What they care for is their own pleasure and their own pride."

"Not all," said Esther, on whom these words fell with a painful jar.

"All I have ever loved," said Mrs. Transome. She paused a moment or two, and then said, "For more than twenty years I have not had an hour's happiness. Harold knows it, and yet he is hard to me."

"He will not be. To-morrow he will not be. I am sure he will be good," said Esther, pleadingly. "Remember — he said to me his trouble was new — he has not had time."

"It is too hard to bear, dear," Mrs. Transome said, a new sob rising as she clung fast to Esther in return. "I am old, and expect so little now — a very little thing would seem great. Why should I be punished any more?"

Esther found it difficult to speak. The dimly-suggested tragedy of this woman's life, the dreary waste of years empty of sweet trust and affection, afflicted her even to horror. It seemed to have come as a last vision to urge her towards the life where the draughts of joy sprang from the unchanging fountains of reverence and devout love.

But all the more she longed to still the pain of this heart that beat against hers.

"Do let me go to your own room with you, and let me undress you, and let me tend upon you," she said, with a woman's gentle instinct. "It will be a very great thing to me. I shall seem to have a mother again. Do let me."

Mrs. Transome yielded at last, and let Esther soothe her with a daughter's tendance. She was undressed and went to bed; and at last dozed fitfully, with frequent starts. But Esther watched by her till the chills of morning came, and then she only wrapped more warmth around her, and slept fast in the chair till Denner's movement in the room roused her. She started out of a dream in which she was telling Felix what had happened to her that night.

Mrs. Transome was now in the sounder morning sleep which sometimes comes after a long night of misery. Esther beckoned Denner into the dressing-room, and said, —

"It is late, Mrs. Hickes. Do you think Mr. Harold is out of his room?"

"Yes, a long while; he was out earlier than usual."

"Will you ask him to come up here? Say I begged you."

When Harold entered, Esther was leaning against the back of the empty chair where yesterday he had seen his mother sitting. He was in a state of wonder and suspense, and when Esther approached him and gave him her hand, he said, in a startled way, —

"Good God! how ill you look! Have you been sitting up with my mother?"

"Yes. She is asleep now," said Esther. They had merely pressed hands by way of greeting, and now stood apart looking at each other solemnly.

"Has she told you anything?" said Harold.

"No — only that she is wretched. Oh, I think I would bear a great deal of unhappiness to save her from having any more."

A painful thrill passed through Harold, and showed itself in his face with that pale rapid flash which can never be painted. Esther pressed her hands together, and said, timidly, though it was from an urgent prompting, —

"There is nothing in all this place — nothing since ever I came here — I could care for so much as that you should sit down by her now, and that she should see you when she wakes."

Then with delicate instinct, she added, just laying her hand on his sleeve, "I know you would have come. I know you meant it. But she is asleep now. Go gently before she wakes."

Harold just laid his right hand for an instant on the back of Esther's as it rested on his sleeve, and then stepped softly to his mother's bedside.

An hour afterwards, when Harold had laid his mother's pillow afresh, and sat down again by her, she said, —

"If that dear thing will marry you, Harold, it will make up to you for a great deal."

But before the day closed Harold knew that this was not to be. That young presence, which had fitted like a white new-winged dove over all the saddening relics and new finery of Transome Court, could not find its home there. Harold heard from Esther's lips that she loved some one else, and that she resigned all claim to the Transome estates.

She wished to go back to her father.

CHAPTER LI.

The maiden said, I wis the londe
Is very fair to see,
But my true-love that is in bonde
Is fairer still to me.

ONE April day, when the sun shone on the lingering rain-drops, Lyddy was gone out, and Esther chose to sit in the kitchen, in the wicker-chair against the white table, between the fire and the window. The kettle was singing, and the clock was ticking steadily towards four o'clock.

She was not reading, but stitching; and as her fingers moved nimbly, something played about her parted lips like a ray. Suddenly she laid down her work, pressed her hands together on her knees, and bent forward a little. The next moment there came a loud rap at the door. She started up and opened it, but kept herself hidden behind it.

"Mr. Lyon at home?" said Felix, in his firm tones.

"No, sir," said Esther from behind her screen; "but Miss Lyon is, if you'll please to walk in."

"Esther!" exclaimed Felix, amazed.

They held each other by both hands, and looked into each other's faces with delight.

"You are out of prison?"

"Yes, till I do something bad again. But you? — how is it all?"

"Oh, it is," said Esther, smiling brightly as she moved towards the wicker-chair, and seated herself again, "that everything is as usual: my father is gone to see the sick; Liddy is gone in deep despondency to buy the grocery; and I am sitting here, with some vanity in me, needing to be scolded."

Felix had seated himself on a chair that happened to be near her, at the corner of the table. He looked at her still with questioning eyes — he grave, she mischievously smiling.

"Are you come back to live here then?"

"Yes."

"You are not going to be married to Harold Transome, or to be rich?"

"No." Something made Esther take up her work again, and begin to stitch. The smiles were dying into a tremor.

"Why?" said Felix, in rather a low tone, leaning his elbow on the table, and resting his head on his hand while he looked at her.

"I did not wish to marry him, or to be rich."

"You have given it all up?" said Felix, leaning forward a little, and speaking in a still lower tone.

Esther did not speak. They heard the kettle singing and the clock loudly ticking. There was no knowing how it was: Esther's work fell, their eyes met; and the next instant their arms were round each other's necks, and once more they kissed each other.

When their hands fell again, their eyes were bright with tears. Felix laid his hand on her shoulder.

"Could you share the life of a poor man, then, Esther?"

"If I thought well enough of him," she said, the smile coming again, with the pretty saucy movement of her head.

"Have you considered well what it would be? — that it would be a very bare and simple life?"

"Yes — without attar of roses."

Felix suddenly removed his hand from her shoulder, rose from his chair, and walked a step or two; then he turned round and said, with deep gravity, —

"And the people I shall live among, Esther? They have not just the same follies and vices as the rich, but they have their own forms of folly and vice; and they have not what are called the refinements of the rich to make their faults more bearable. I don't say more bearable to me — I'm not fond of those refinements; but you are."

Felix paused an instant, and then added, —

"It is very serious, Esther."

"I know it is serious," said Esther, looking up at him. "Since I have been at Transome Court I have seen many things very seriously. If I had not, I should not have left what I did leave. I made a deliberate choice."

Felix stood a moment or two, dwelling on her with a face where the gravity gathered tenderness.

"And these curls?" he said, with a sort of relenting, seating himself again, and putting his hand on them.

"They cost nothing — they are natural."

"You are such a delicate creature."

"I am very healthy. Poor women, I think, are healthier than the rich. Besides," Esther went on, with a mischievous meaning, "I think of having some wealth."

"How?" said Felix, with an anxious start. "What do you mean?"

"I think even of two pounds a week: one needn't live up to the splendor of all that, you know; we might live as simply as you liked: there would be money to spare, and you could do wonders, and be obliged to work too, only not if sickness came. And then I think of a little income for your mother, enough for her to live as she has been used to live; and a little income for my father, to save him from being dependent when he is no longer able to preach."

Esther said all this in a playful tone, but she ended, with a grave look of appealing submission, —

"I mean — if you approve. I wish to do what you think it will be right to do."

Felix put his hand on her shoulder again and reflected a

little while, looking on the hearth: then he said, lifting up his eyes, with a smile at her, —

“Why, I shall be able to set up a great library, and lend the books to be dog’s-eared and marked with bread-crumbs.”

Esther said, laughing, “You think you are to do everything. You don’t know how clever I am. I mean to go on teaching a great many things.”

“Teaching me?”

“Oh yes,” she said, with a little toss; “I shall improve your French accent.”

“You won’t want me to wear a stock,” said Felix, with a defiant shake of the head.

“No; and you will not attribute stupid thoughts to me before I’ve uttered them.”

They laughed merrily, each holding the other’s arms, like girl and boy. There was the ineffable sense of youth in common.

Then Felix leaned forward, that their lips might meet again, and after that his eyes roved tenderly over her face and curls.

“I’m a rough, severe fellow, Esther. Shall you never repent? — never be inwardly reproaching me that I was not a man who could have shared your wealth? Are you quite sure?”

“Quite sure!” said Esther, shaking her head; “for then I should have honored you less. I am weak — my husband must be greater and nobler than I am.”

“Oh, I tell you what, though!” said Felix, starting up, thrusting his hands into his pockets, and creasing his brow, playfully, “if you take me in that way I shall be forced to be a much better fellow than I ever thought of being.”

“I call that retribution,” said Esther, with a laugh as sweet as the morning thrush.

EPILOGUE.

*Our finest hope is finest memory;
And those who love in age think youth is happy,
Because it has a life to fill with love.*

THE very next May, Felix and Esther were married. Every one in those days was married at the parish church; but Mr. Lyon was not satisfied without an additional private solemnity, “wherein there was no bondage to questionable forms.

so that he might have a more enlarged utterance of joy and supplication."

It was a very simple wedding; but no wedding, even the gayest, ever raised so much interest and debate in Treby Magna. Even very great people, like Sir Maximus and his family, went to the church to look at this bride, who had renounced wealth, and chosen to be the wife of a man who said he would always be poor.

Some few shook their heads; could not quite believe it; and thought there was "more behind." But the majority of honest Trebians were affected somewhat in the same way as happy-looking Mr. Wace was, who observed to his wife, as they walked from under the churchyard chestnuts, "It's wonderful how things go through you—you don't know how. I feel somehow as if I believed more in everything that's good."

Mrs. Holt, that day, said she felt herself to be receiving "some reward," implying that justice certainly had much more in reserve. Little Job Tudge had an entirely new suit, of which he fingered every separate brass button in a way that threatened an arithmetical mania; and Mrs. Holt had out her best tea-trays and put down her carpet again, with the satisfaction of thinking that there would no more be boys coming in all weathers with dirty shoes.

For Felix and Esther did not take up their abode in Treby Magna; and after a while Mr. Lyon left the town too, and joined them where they dwelt. On his resignation the church in Malthouse Yard chose a successor to him whose doctrine was rather higher.

There was other departures from Treby. Mr. Jermyn's establishment was broken up, and he was understood to have gone to reside at a great distance: some said "abroad," that large home of ruined reputations. Mr. Johnson continued blond and sufficiently prosperous till he got gray and rather more prosperous. Some persons, who did not think highly of him, held that his prosperity was a fact to be kept in the background, as being dangerous to the morals of the young; judging that it was not altogether creditable to the Divine Providence that anything but virtue should be rewarded by a front and back drawing-room in Bedford Row.

As for Mr. Christian, he had no more profitable secrets at his disposal. But he got his thousand pounds from Harold Transome.

The Transome family were absent for some time from Tran

some Court. The place was kept up and shown to visitors, but not by Denner, who was away with her mistress. After a while the family came back, and Mrs. Transome died there. Sir Maximus was at her funeral, and throughout that neighborhood there was silence about the past.

Uncle Lingon continued to watch over the shooting on the Manor and the covers until that event occurred which he had predicted as a part of Church reform sure to come. Little Treby had a new rector, but others were sorry besides the old pointers.

As to all that wide parish of Treby Magna, it has since prospered as the rest of England has prospered. Doubtless there is more enlightenment now. Whether the farmers are all public-spirited, the shopkeepers nobly independent, the Sproxton men entirely sober and judicious, the Dissenters quite without narrowness or asperity in religion and politics, and the publicans all fit, like Gaius, to be the friends of an apostle — these things I have not heard, not having correspondence in those parts. Whether any presumption may be drawn from the fact that North Loamshire does not yet return a Radical candidate, I leave to the all-wise — I mean the newspapers.

As to the town in which Felix Holt now resides. I will keep that a secret, lest he should be troubled by any visitor having the insufferable motive of curiosity.

I will only say that Esther has never repented. Felix, however, grumbles a little that she has made his life too easy, and that, if it were not for much walking, he should be a sleek dog.

There is a young Felix, who has a great deal more science than his father, but not much more money.

POETICAL WORKS

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THE SPANISH GYPSY.

This Work was originally written in the winter of 1864-65; after a visit to Spain in 1867 it was rewritten and amplified. The reader conversant with Spanish poetry will see that in two of the Lyrics an attempt has been made to imitate the trochaic measure and assonance of the Spanish Ballad.

May 1868.

BOOK I.

'Tis the warm South, where Europe spreads her lands
Like fretted leaflets, breathing on the deep:
Broad-breasted Spain, leaning with equal love
On the Mid Sea that moans with memories,
And on the untravelled Ocean's restless tides.
This river, shadowed by the battlements
And gleaming silvery towards the northern sky,
Feeds the famed stream that waters Andalus
And loiters, amorous of the fragrant air,
By Córdoba and Seville to the bay
Fronting Algarva and the wandering flood
Of Guadiana. This deep mountain gorge
Slopes widening on the olive-pluméd plains
Of fair Granáda: one far-stretching arm
Points to Elvira, one to eastward heights
Of Alpujarras where the new-bathed Day
With oriflamme uplifted o'er the peaks
Saddens the breasts of northward-looking snows
That loved the night, and soared with soaring stars;
Flashing the signals of his nearing swiftness

From Almería's purple-shadowed bay
 On to the far-off rocks that gaze and glow —
 On to Alhambra, strong and ruddy heart
 Of glorious Morisma, gasping now,
 A maiméd giant in his agony.
 This town that dips its feet within the stream,
 And seems to sit a tower-crowned Cybele,
 Spreading her ample robe adown the rocks,
 Is rich Bedmár: 'twas Moorish long ago,
 But now the Cross is sparkling on the Mosque,
 And bells make Catholic the trembling air.
 The fortress gleams in Spanish sunshine now
 ('Tis south a mile before the rays are Moorish) —
 Hereditary jewel, agraffe bright
 On all the many-titled privilege
 Of young Duke Silva. No Castilian knight
 That serves Queen Isabel has higher charge;
 For near this frontier sits the Moorish king,
 Not Boabdil the waverer, who usurps
 A throne he trembles in, and fawning licks
 The feet of conquerors, but that fierce lion
 Grisly El Zagal, who has made his lair
 In Guadix' fort, and rushing thence with strength,
 Half his own fierceness, half the untainted heart
 Of mountain bands that fight for holiday,
 Wastes the fair lands that lie by Alcalá,
 Wreathing his horse's neck with Christian heads.

To keep the Christian frontier — such high trust
 Is young Duke Silva's; and the time is great.
 (What times are little? To the sentinel
 That hour is regal when he mounts on guard.)
 The fifteenth century since the Man Divine
 Taught and was hated in Capernaum
 Is near its end — is falling as a husk
 Away from all the fruit its years have ripened.
 The Moslem faith, now flickering like a torch
 In a night struggle on this shore of Spain,
 Glares, a broad column of advancing flame,
 Along the Danube and the Illyrian shore
 Far into Italy, where eager monks,
 Who watch in dreams and dream the while they watch,
 See Christ grow paler in the baleful light,
 Crying again the cry of the forsaken.

But faith, the stronger for extremity,
Becomes prophetic, hears the far-off tread
Of western chivalry, sees downward sweep
The archangel Michael with the gleaming sword,
And listens for the shriek of hurrying fiends
Chased from their revels in God's sanctuary.
So trusts the monk, and lifts appealing eyes
To the high dome, the Church's firmament,
Where the blue light-pierced curtain, rolled away,
Reveals the throne and Him who sits thereon.
So trust the men whose best hope for the world
Is ever that the world is near its end :
Impatient of the stars that keep their course
And make no pathway for the coming Judge.

But other futures stir the world's great heart.
The West now enters on the heritage
Won from the tombs of mighty ancestors,
The seeds, the gold, the gems, the silent harps
That lay deep buried with the memories
Of old renown.
No more, as once in sunny Avignon,
The poet-scholar spreads the Homeric page,
And gazes sadly, like the deaf at song ;
For now the old epic voices ring again
And vibrate with the beat and melody
Stirred by the warmth of old Ionian days.
The martyred sage, the Attic orator,
Immortally incarnate, like the gods,
In spiritual bodies, wingéd words
Holding a universe impalpable,
Find a new audience. For evermore,
With grander resurrection than was feigned
Of Attila's fierce Huns, the soul of Greece
Conquers the bulk of Persia. The maimed form
Of calmly-joyous beauty, marble-limbed,
Yet breathing with the thought that shaped its lips,
Looks mild reproach from out its opened grave
At creeds of terror ; and the vine-wreathed god
Fronts the pierced Image with the crown of thorns.
The soul of man is widening towards the past :
No longer hanging at the breast of life
Feeding in blindness to his parentage —
Quenching all wonder with Omnipotence,

Praising a name with indolent piety —
He spells the record of his long descent,
More largely conscious of the life that was.
And from the height that shows where morning shone
On far-off summits pale and gloomy now,
The horizon widens round him, and the west
Looks vast with untracked waves whereon his gaze
Follows the flight of the swift-vanished bird
That like the sunken sun is mirrored still
Upon the yearning soul within the eye.
And so in Córdoba through patient nights
Columbus watches, or he sails in dreams
Between the setting stars and finds new day;
Then wakes again to the old weary days,
Girds on the cord and frock of pale Saint Francis,
And like him zealous pleads with foolish men.
“I ask but for a million maravedis:
Give me three caravels to find a world,
New shores, new realms, new soldiers for the Cross.
Son cosas grandes!” Thus he pleads in vain;
Yet faints not utterly, but pleads anew,
Thinking, “God means it, and has chosen me.”
For this man is the pulse of all mankind
Feeding an embryo future, offspring strange
Of the fond Present, that with mother-prayers
And mother-fancies looks for championship
Of all her loved beliefs and old-world ways
From that young Time she bears within her womb.
The sacred places shall be purged again,
The Turk converted, and the Holy Church,
Like the mild Virgin with the outspread robe,
Shall fold all tongues and nations lovingly.

But since God works by armies, who shall be
The modern Cyrus? Is it France most Christian,
Who with his lilies and brocaded knights,
French oaths, French vices, and the newest style
Of out-puffed sleeve, shall pass from west to east,
A winnowing fan to purify the seed
For fair millennial harvests soon to come?
Or is not Spain the land of chosen warriors? —
Crusaders consecrated from the womb,
Carrying the sword-cross stamped upon their souls
By the long yearnings of a nation's life,

Through all the seven patient centuries
Since first Pelayo and his resolute band
Trusted the God within their Gothic hearts
At Covadunga, and defied Mahound;
Beginning so the Holy War of Spain
That now is panting with the eagerness
Of labor near its end. The silver cross
Glitters o'er Malaga and streams dread light
On Moslem galleys, turning all their stores
From threats to gifts. What Spanish knight is he
Who, living now, holds it not shame to live
Apart from that hereditary battle
Which needs his sword? Castilian gentlemen
Choose not their task — they choose to do it well.

The time is great, and greater no man's trust
Than his who keeps the fortress for his king,
Wearing great honors as some delicate robe
Brocaded o'er with names 'twere sin to tarnish.
Born de la Cerda, Calatravan knight,
Count of Segura, fourth Duke of Bedmár,
Offshoot from that high stock of old Castile
Whose topmost branch is proud Medina Celi —
Such titles with their blazonry are his
Who keeps this fortress, its sworn governor,
Lord of the valley, master of the town,
Commanding whom he will, himself commanded
By Christ his Lord who sees him from the Cross
And from bright heaven where the Mother pleads; —
By good Saint James upon the milk-white steed,
Who leaves his bliss to fight for chosen Spain; —
By the dead gaze of all his ancestors; —
And by the mystery of his Spanish blood
Charged with the awe and glories of the past.

See now with soldiers in his front and rear
He winds at evening through the narrow streets
That toward the Castle gate climb devious:
His charger, of fine Andalusian stock,
An Indian beauty, black but delicate,
Is conscious of the herald trumpet note,
The gathering glances, and familiar ways
That lead fast homeward: she forgets fatigue,
And at the light touch of the master's spur

Thrills with the zeal to bear him royally,
Arches her neck and clambers up the stones
As if disdainful of the difficult steep.
Night-black the charger, black the rider's plume,
But all between is bright with morning hues —
Seems ivory and gold and deep blue gems,
And starry flashing steel and pale vermilion,
All set in jasper: on his surcoat white
Glitter the sword-belt and the jewelled hilt,
Red on the back and breast the holy cross,
And 'twixt the helmet and the soft-spun white
Thick tawny wavelets like the lion's mane
Turn backward from his brow, pale, wide, erect,
Shadowing blue eyes — blue as the rain-washed sky
That braced the early stem of Gothic kings
He claims for ancestry. A goodly knight,
A noble caballero, broad of chest
And long of limb. So much the August sun,
Now in the west but shooting half its beams
Past a dark rocky profile toward the plain,
At windings of the path across the slope
Makes suddenly luminous for all who see:
For women smiling from the terraced roofs;
For boys that prone on trucks with head up-propped
Lazy and curious, stare irreverent;
For men who make obeisance with degrees
Of good-will shading towards servility,
Where good-will ends and secret fear begins
And curses, too, low-muttered through the teeth,
Explanatory to the God of Shem.

Five, grouped within a whitened tavern court
Of Moorish fashion, where the trellised vines
Purpling above their heads make odorous shade,
Note through the open door the passers-by,
Getting some rills of novelty to speed
The lagging stream of talk and help the wine.
'Tis Christian to drink wine: whoso denies
His flesh at bidding save of Holy Church,
Let him beware and take to Christian sins
Lest he be taxed with Moslem sanctity.

The souls are five, the talkers only three.
(No time, most tainted by wrong faith and rule,

But holds some listeners and dumb animals.)
MINE Host is one: he with the well-arched nose,
Soft-eyed, fat-handed, loving men for nought
But his own humor, patting old and young
Upon the back, and mentioning the cost
With confidential blandness, as a tax
That he collected much against his will
From Spaniards who were all his bosom friends:
Warranted Christian — else how keep an inn,
Which calling asks true faith? though like his wine
Of cheaper sort, a trifle over-new.
His father was a convert, chose the chrism
As men choose physic, kept his chimney warm
With smokiest wood upon a Saturday,
Counted his gains and grudges on a chaplet,
And crossed himself asleep for fear of spies;
Trusting the God of Israel would see
'Twas Christian tyranny that made him base.
Our host his son was born ten years too soon,
Had heard his mother call him Ephraim,
Knew holy things from common, thought it sin
To feast on days when Israel's children mourned,
So had to be converted with his sire,
To doff the awe he learned as Ephraim,
And suit his manners to a Christian name.
But infant awe, that unborn moving thing,
Dies with what nourished it, can never rise
From the dead womb and walk and seek new pasture.
Thus baptism seemed to him a merry game
Not tried before, all sacraments a mode
Of doing homage for one's property,
And all religions a queer human whim
Or else a vice, according to degrees:
As, 'tis a whim to like your chestnuts hot,
Burn your own mouth and draw your face awry,
A vice to pelt frogs with them — animals
Content to take life coolly. And Lorenzo
Would have all lives made easy, even lives
Of spiders and inquisitors, yet still
Wishing so well to flies and Moors and Jews
He rather wished the others easy death;
For loving all men clearly was deferred
Till all men loved each other. Such mine Host,
With chiselled smile caressing Seneca,
The solemn mastiff leaning on his knee.

His right-hand guest is solemn as the dog,
Square-faced and massive : BLASCO is his name,
A prosperous silversmith from Aragon ;
In speech not silvery, rather tuned as notes
From a deep vessel made of plenteous iron,
Or some great bell of slow but certain swing
That, if you only wait, will tell the hour
As well as flippant clocks that strike in haste
And set off chiming a superfluous tune —
Like JUAN there, the spare man with the lute,
Who makes you dizzy with his rapid tongue,
Whirring athwart your mind with comment swift
On speech you would have finished by and by,
Shooting your bird for you while you are loading,
Cheapening your wisdom as a pattern known,
Woven by any shuttle on demand.
Can never sit quite still, too : sees a wasp
And kills it with a movement like a flash ;
Whistles low notes or seems to thrum his lute
As a mere hyphen 'twixt two syllables
Of any steadier man ; walks up and down
And snuffs the orange flowers and shoots a pea
To hit a streak of light let through the awning.
Has a queer face : eyes large as plums, a nose
Small, round, uneven, like a bit of wax
Melted and cooled by chance. Thin-fingered, lithe,
And as a squirrel noiseless, startling men
Only by quickness. In his speech and look
A touch of graceful wildness, as of things
Not trained or tamed for uses of the world ;
Most like the Fauns that roamed in days of old
About the listening whispering woods, and shared
The subtler sense of sylvan ears and eyes
Undulled by scheming thought, yet joined the rout
Of men and women on the festal days,
And played the syrinx too, and knew love's pains,
Turning their anguish into melody.
For Juan was a minstrel still, in times
When minstrelsy was held a thing outworn.
Spirits seem buried and their epitaph
Is writ in Latin by severest pens,
Yet still they flit above the trodden grave
And find new bodies, animating them
In quaint and ghostly way with antique souls.

So Juan was a troubadour revived,
Freshening life's dusty road with babbling rills
Of wit and song, living 'mid harnessed men
With limbs ungalled by armor, ready so
To soothe them weary, and to cheer them sad.
Guest at the board, companion in the camp,
A crystal mirror to the life around,
Flashing the comment keen of simple fact
Defined in words; lending brief lyric voice
To grief and sadness; hardly taking note
Of difference betwixt his own and others';
But rather singing as a listener
To the deep moans, the cries, the wild strong joys
Of universal Nature, old yet young.
Such Juan, the third talker, shimmering bright
As butterfly or bird with quickest life.
The silent ROLDAN has his brightness too,
But only in his spangles and rosettes.
His parti-colored vest and crimson hose
Are dulled with old Valencian dust, his eyes
With straining fifty years at gilded balls
To catch them dancing, or with brazen looks
At men and women as he made his jests
Some thousand times and watched to count the pence
His wife was gathering. His olive face
Has an old writing in it, characters
Stamped deep by grins that had no merriment,
The soul's rude mark proclaiming all its blank;
As on some faces that have long grown old
In lifting tapers up to forms obscene
On ancient walls and chuckling with false zest
To please my lord, who gives the larger fee
For that hard industry in apishness.
Roldan would gladly never laugh again;
Pensioned, he would be grave as any ox,
And having beans and crumbs and oil secured
Would borrow no man's jokes for evermore.
'Tis harder now because his wife is gone,
Who had quick feet, and danced to ravishment
Of every ring jewelled with Spanish eyes,
But died and left this boy, lame from his birth,
And sad and obstinate, though when he will
He sings God-taught such marrow-thrilling strains
As seem the very voice of dying Spring,

A flute-like wail that mourns the blossoms gone,
And sinks, and is not, like their fragrant breath,
With fine transition on the trembling air.
He sits as if imprisoned by some fear,
Motionless, with wide eyes that seem not made
For hungry glancing of a twelve-year'd boy
To mark the living thing that he could tease,
But for the gaze of some primeval sadness
Dark twin with light in the creative ray.
This little PABLO has his spangles too,
And large rosettes to hide his poor left foot
Rounded like any hoof (his mother thought
God willed it so to punish all her sins).

I said the souls were five — besides the dog.
But there was still a sixth, with wrinkled face,
Grave and disgusted with all merriment
Not less than Roldan. It is ANNIBAL,
The experienced monkey who performs the tricks,
Jumps through the hoops, and carries round the hat
Once full of sallies and impromptu feats,
Now cautious not to light on aught that's new,
Lest he be whipped to do it o'er again
From A to Z, and make the gentry laugh:
A misanthropic monkey, gray and grim,
Bearing a lot that has no remedy
For want of concert in the monkey tribe.

We see the company, above their heads
The braided matting, golden as ripe corn,
Stretched in a curving strip close by the grapes,
Elsewhere rolled back to greet the cooler sky;
A fountain near, vase-shapen and broad-lipped,
Where timorous birds alight with tiny feet,
And hesitate and bend wise listening ears,
And fly away again with undipped beak.
On the stone floor the juggler's heaped-up goods,
Carpet and hoops, viol and tambourine,
Where Annibal sits perched with brows severe,
A serious ape whom none take seriously,
Obliged in this fool's world to earn his nuts
By hard buffoonery. We see them all,
And hear their talk — the talk of Spanish men,
With Southern intonation, vowels turned

Caressingly between the consonants,
Persuasive, willing, with such intervals
As music borrows from the wooing birds,
That plead with subtly curving, sweet descent —
And yet can quarrel, as these Spaniards can.

JUAN (*near the doorway*).

You hear the trumpet? There's old Ramon's blast.
No bray but his can shake the air so well.
He takes his trumpeting as solemnly
As angel charged to wake the dead; thinks war
Was made for trumpeters, and their great art
Made solely for themselves who understand it.
His features all have shaped themselves to blowing,
And when his trumpet's bagged or left at home
He seems a chattel in a broker's booth,
A spoutless watering-can, a promise to pay
No sum particular. O fine old Ramon!
The blasts get louder and the clattering hoofs;
They crack the ear as well as heaven's thunder
For owls that listen blinking. There's the banner.

Host (*joining him: the others follow to the door*).

The Duke has finished reconnoitring, then?
We shall hear news. They say he means a sally —
Would strike El Zagal's Moors as they push home
Like ants with booty heavier than themselves;
Then, joined by other nobles with their bands,
Lay siege to Guadix. Juan, you're a bird
That nest within the Castle. What say you?

JUAN.

Nought, I say nought. 'T is but a toilsome game
To bet upon that feather Policy,
And guess where after twice a hundred puffs
'T will catch another feather crossing it:
Guess how the Pope will blow and how the king;
What force my lady's fan has; how a cough
Seizing the Padre's throat may raise a gust,
And how the queen may sigh the feather down.
Such catching at imaginary threads,

Such spinning twisted air, is not for me.
If I should want a game, I 'll rather bet
On racing snails, two large, slow, lingering snails —
No spurring, equal weights — a chance sublime,
Nothing to guess at, pure uncertainty.
Here comes the Duke. They give but feeble shouts.
And some look sour.

Host.

That spoils a fair occasion.
Civility brings no conclusions with it,
And cheerful *Vivas* make the moments glide
Instead of grating like a rusty wheel.

JUAN.

O they are dullards, kick because they 're stung,
And bruise a friend to show they hate a wasp.

Host.

Best treat your wasp with delicate regard;
When the right moment comes say, "By your leave,"
Use your heel — so! and make an end of him.
That's if we talked of wasps; but our young Duke —
Spain holds not a more gallant gentleman.
Live, live, Duke Silva! 'Tis a rare smile he has,
But seldom seen.

JUAN.

A true hidalgo's smile,
That gives much favor, but beseeches none.
His smile is sweetened by his gravity:
It comes like dawn upon Sierra snows,
Seeming more generous for the coldness gone;
Breaks from the calm — a sudden opening flower
On dark deep waters: now a chalice shut,
A mystic shrine, the next a full-rayed star,
Thrilling, pulse-quickenings as a living word.
I'll make a song of that.

Host.

Prithee, not now.
You'll fall to staring like a wooden saint,

And wag your head as it were set on wires.
Here's fresh sherbét. Sit, be good company.
(To BLASCO) You are a stranger, sir, and cannot know
How our Duke's nature suits his princely frame.

BLASCO.

Nay, but I marked his spurs — chased cunningly !
A duke should know good gold and silver plate ;
Then he will know the quality of mine.
I've ware for tables and for altars too,
Our Lady in all sizes, crosses, bells :
He'll need such weapons full as much as swords
If he would capture any Moorish town.
For, let me tell you, when a mosque is cleansed . . .

JUAN.

The demons fly so thick from sound of bells
And smell of incense, you may see the air
Streaked with them as with smoke. Why, they are
spirits :
You may well think how crowded they must be
To make a sort of haze.

BLASCO.

I knew not that.
Still, they 're of smoky nature, demons are ;
And since you say so — well, it proves the more
The need of bells and censers. Ay, your Duke
Sat well : a true hidalgo. I can judge —
Of harness specially. I saw the camp,
The royal camp at Velez Malaga.
'T was like the court of heaven — such liveries !
And torches carried by the score at night
Before the nobles. Sirs, I made a dish
To set an emerald in would fit a crown,
For Don Alonzo, lord of Aguilar.
Your Duke's no whit behind him in his mien
Or harness either. But you seem to say
The people love him not.

HOST.

They 've nought against him.
But certain winds will make men's temper bad.
When the Solano blows hot venom'd breath,
It acts upon men's knives: steel takes to stabbing
Which else, with cooler winds, were honest steel,
Cutting but garlick. There 's a wind just now
Blows right from Seville —

BLASCO.

Ay, you mean the wind . . .
Yes, yes, a wind that 's rather hot . . .

HOST.

With fagots.

JUAN.

A wind that suits not with our townsmen's blood.
Abram, 't is said, objected to be scorched,
And, as the learned Arabs vouch, he gave
The antipathy in full to Ishmaël.
'T is true, these patriarchs had their oddities.

BLASCO.

Their oddities? I 'm of their mind, I know.
Though, as to Abraham and Ishmaël,
I 'm an old Christian, and owe nought to them
Or any Jew among them. But I know
We made a stir in Saragossa — we:
The men of Aragon ring hard — true metal.
Sirs, I'm no friend to heresy, but then
A Christian's money is not safe. As how?
A lapsing Jew or any heretic
May owe me twenty ounces: suddenly
He's prisoned, suffers penalties — 't is well:
If men will not believe, 't is good to make them,
But let the penalties fall on them alone.
The Jew is stripped, his goods are confiscate;
Now, where, I pray you, go my twenty ounces?

God knows, and perhaps the King may, but not I.
 And more, my son may lose his young wife's dower
 Because 't was promised since her father's soul
 Fell to wrong thinking. How was I to know?
 I could but use my sense and cross myself.
 Christian is Christian — I give in — but still
 Taxing is taxing, though you call it holy.
 We Saragossans liked not this new tax
 They call the — nonsense, I 'm from Aragon!
 I speak too bluntly. But, for Holy Church,
 No man believes more.

HOST.

Nay, sir, never fear.
 Good Master Roldan here is no delator.

ROLDAN (*starting from a reverie*).

You speak to me, sirs? I perform to-night —
 The Plaça Santiago. Twenty tricks,
 All different. I dance, too. And the boy
 Sings like a bird. I crave your patronage.

BLASCO.

Faith, you shall have it, sir. In travelling
 I take a little freedom, and am gay.
 You marked not what I said just now?

ROLDAN.

I? no.

I pray your pardon. I 've a twinging knee,
 That makes it hard to listen. You were saying?

BLASCO.

Nay, it was nought. (*Aside to Host*) Is it his deepness?

HOST.

No.

He's deep in nothing but his poverty.

BLASCO.

But 't was his poverty that made me think . . .

HOST.

His piety might wish to keep the feasts
As well as fasts. No fear; he hears not.

BLASCO.

Good.

I speak my mind about the penalties,
But, look you, I'm against assassination.
You know my meaning — Master Arbués,
The grand Inquisitor in Aragon.
I knew nought — paid no copper towards the deed.
But I was there, at prayers, within the church.
How could I help it? Why, the saints were there,
And looked straight on above the altars. I . . .

JUAN.

Looked carefully another way.

BLASCO.

Why, at my beads

'T was after midnight, and the canons all
Were chanting matins. I was not in church
To gape and stare. I saw the martyr kneel:
I never liked the look of him alive —
He was no martyr then. I thought he made
An ugly shadow as he crept athwart
The bands of light, then passed within the gloom
By the broad pillar. 'T was in our great Seo,
At Saragossa. The pillars tower so large
You cross yourself to see them, lest white Death
Should hide behind their back. And so it was.
I looked away again and told my beads
Unthinkingly; but still a man has ears;
And right across the chanting came a sound
As if a tree had crashed above the roar
Of some great torrent. So it seemed to me;

For when you listen long and shut your eyes
Small sounds get thunderous. He had a shell
Like any lobster: a good iron suit
From top to toe beneath the innocent serge.
That made the tell-tale sound. But then came shrieks.
The chanting stopped and turned to rushing feet,
And in the midst lay Master Arbués,
Felled like an ox. 'T was wicked butchery.
Some honest men had hoped it would have scared
The Inquisition out of Aragon.
'T was money thrown away — I would say, crime —
Clean thrown away.

Host.

That was a pity now.
Next to a missing thrust, what irks me most
Is a neat well-aimed stroke that kills your man,
Yet ends in mischief — as in Aragon.
It was a lesson to our people here.
Else there's a monk within our city walls,
A holy, high-born, stern Dominican,
They might have made the great mistake to kill.

BLASCO.

What! is he? . . .

Host.

Yes; a Master Arbués
Of finer quality. The Prior here
And uncle to our Duke.

BLASCO.

He will want plate:
A holy pillar or a crucifix.
But, did you say, he was like Arbués?

JUAN.

As a black eagle with gold beak and claws
Is like a raven. Even in his cowl,
Covered from head to foot, the Prior is known
From all the black herd round. When he uncovers

And stands white-frocked, with ivory face, his eyes
 Black-gleaming, black his coronal of hair
 Like shredded jasper, he seems less a man
 With struggling aims, than pure incarnate Will,
 Fit to subdue rebellious nations, nay,
 That human flesh he breathes in, charged with passion
 Which quivers in his nostril and his lip,
 But disciplined by long in-dwelling will
 To silent labor in the yoke of law.
 A truce to thy comparisons, Lorenzo !
 Thine is no subtle nose for difference ;
 'Tis dulled by feigning and civility.

Host.

Pooh, thou 'rt a poet, crazed with finding words
 May stick to things and seem like qualities.
 No pebble is a pebble in thy hands :
 'T is a moon out of work, a barren egg,
 Or twenty things that no man sees but thee.
 Our Father Isidor's — a living saint,
 And that is heresy, some townsmen think :
 Saints should be dead, according to the Church.
 My mind is this : the Father is so holy
 'T were sin to wish his soul detained from bliss.
 Easy translation to the realms above,
 The shortest journey to the seventh heaven,
 Is what I'd never grudge him.

BLASCO.

Piously said.

Look you, I' m dutiful, obey the Church
 When there's no help for it : I mean to say,
 When Pope and Bishop and all customers
 Order alike. But there be bishops now,
 And were aforetime, who have held it wrong,
 This hurry to convert the Jews. As how ?
 Your Jew pays tribute to the bishop, say.
 That's good, and must please God, to see the Church
 Maintained in ways that ease the Christian's purse.
 Convert the Jew, and where's the tribute, pray ?
 He lapses, too : 't is slippery work, conversion :
 And then the holy taxing carries off

His money at one sweep. No tribute more!
He's penitent or burnt, and there's an end.
Now guess which pleases God . . .

JUAN.

Whether he likes
A well-burnt Jew or well-fed bishop best.

[While Juan put this problem theologic
Entered, with resonant step, another guest —
A soldier: all his keenness in his sword,
His eloquence in scars upon his cheek,
His virtue in much slaying of the Moor:
With brow well-creased in horizontal folds
To save the space, as having nought to do:
Lips prone to whistle whisperingly — no tune,
But trotting rhythm: meditative eyes,
Most often fixed upon his legs and spurs:
Styled Captain Lopez.]

LOPEZ.

At your service, sirs.

JUAN.

Ha, Lopez? Why, thou hast a face full-charged
As any herald's. What news of the wars?

LOPEZ.

Such news as is most bitter on my tongue.

JUAN.

Then spit it forth.

HOST.

Sit, Captain: here's a cup,
Fresh-filled. What news?

LOPEZ.

'T is bad. We make no sally:
We sit still here and wait whate'er the Moor
Shall please to do.

THE SPANISH GYPSY.

LOPEZ.

Santiago ! Juan, thou art hard to please.
I speak not for my own delighting, I.
I can be silent, I.

BLASCO.

Nay, sir, speak on !
I like your matter well. I deal in plate.
This wedding touches me. Who is the bride ?

LOPEZ.

One that some say the Duke does ill to wed.
One that his mother reared — God rest her soul ! —
Duchess Diana — she who died last year.
A bird picked up away from any nest.
Her name — the Duchess gave it — is Fedalma.
No harm in that. But the Duke stoops, they say,
In wedding her. And that's the simple truth.

JUAN.

Thy simple truth is but a false opinion :
The simple truth of asses who believe
Their thistle is the very best of food.
Fie, Lopez, thou a Spaniard with a sword
Dreamest a Spanish noble ever stoops
By doing honor to the maid he loves !
He stoops alone when he dishonors her.

LOPEZ.

Nay, I said nought against her.

JUAN.

Better not.

Else I would challenge thee to fight with wits,
And spear thee through and through ere thou couldst draw
The bluntest word. Yes, yes, consult thy spurs :
Spurs are a sign of knighthood, and should tell thee .

POEMS OF GEORGE ELIOT.

That knightly love is blent with reverence
As heavenly air is blent with heavenly blue.
Don Silva's heart beats to a loyal tune :
He wills no highest-born Castilian dame,
Betrothed to highest noble, should be held
More sacred than Fedalma. He enshrines
Her virgin image for the general awe
And for his own — will guard her from the world,
Nay, his profaner self, lest he should lose
The place of his religion. He does well.
Nought can come closer to the poet's strain.

HOST.

Or farther from his practice, Juan, eh ?
If thou 'rt a sample ?

JUAN.

Wrong there, my Lorenzo !
Touching Fedalma the poor poet plays
A finer part even than the noble Duke.

LOPEZ.

By making ditties, singing with round mouth
Likest a crowing cock ? Thou meanest that ?

JUAN.

Lopez, take physic, thou art getting ill,
Growing descriptive ; 't is unnatural.
I mean, Don Silva's love expects reward,
Kneels with a heaven to come ; but the poor poet
Worships without reward, nor hopes to find
A heaven save in his worship. He adores
The sweetest woman for her sweetness' sake,
Joys in the love that was not born for him,
Because 't is lovingness, as beggars joy,
Warming their naked limbs on wayside walls,
To hear a tale of princes and their glory.
There's a poor poet (poor, I mean, in coin)
Worships Fedalma with so true a love
That if her silken robe were changed for rags,

And she were driven out to stony wilds
 Barefoot, a scornéd wanderer, he would kiss
 Her ragged garment's edge, and only ask
 For leave to be her slave. Digest that, friend,
 Or let it lie upon thee as a weight
 To check light thinking of Fedalma.

LOPEZ.

I ?

I think no harm of her ; I thank the saints
 I wear a sword and peddle not in thinking.
 'Tis Father Marcos says she'll not confess
 And loves not holy water ; says her blood
 Is infidel ; says the Duke's wedding her
 Is union of light with darkness.

JUAN.

Tush !

[Now Juan — who by snatches touched his lute
 With soft arpeggio, like a whispered dream
 Of sleeping music, while he spoke of love —
 In jesting anger at the soldier's talk
 Thrummed loud and fast, then faster and more loud,
 Till, as he answered "Tush !" he struck a chord
 Sudden as whip-crack close by Lopez' ear.
 Mine host and Blasco smiled, the mastiff barked,
 Roldan looked up and Annibal looked down,
 Cautiously neutral in so new a case ;
 The boy raised longing, listening eyes that seemed
 An exiled spirit's waiting in strained hope
 Of voices coming from the distant land.
 But Lopez bore the assault like any rock :
 That was not what he drew his sword at — he !
 He spoke with neck erect.]

LOPEZ.

If that's a hint

The company should ask thee for a song,
 Sing, then !

Host.

Ay, Juan, sing, and jar no more.

Something brand new. Thou 'rt wont to make my ear
A test of novelties. Hast thou aught fresh ?

JUAN.

As fresh as rain-drops. Here's a Canción
Springs like a tiny mushroom delicate
Out of the priest's foul scandal of Fedalma.

[He preluded with querying intervals,
Rising, then falling just a semitone,
In minor cadence — sound with poised wing
Hovering and quivering towards the needed fall.
Then in a voice that shook the willing air
With masculine vibration sang this song.

*Should I long that dark were fair ?
Say, O song !
Lacks my love aught, that I should long ?*

*Dark the night, with breath all flow'rs,
And tender broken voice that fills
With ravishment the listening hours :
Whisperings, wooings,
Liquid ripples and soft ring-dove cooings
In low-toned rhythm that love's aching stills.
Dark the night,
Yet is she bright,
For in her dark she brings the mystic star,
Trembling yet strong, as is the voice of love,
From some unknown afar.
O radiant Dark ! O darkly-fostered ray !
Thou hast a joy too deep for shallow Day.*

While Juan sang all round the tavern court
Gathered a constellation of black eyes.
Fat Lola leaned upon the balcony
With arms that might have pillowed Hercules
(Who built, 't is known, the mightiest Spanish towns);
Thin Alda's face, sad as a wasted passion,
Leaned o'er the nodding baby's ; 'twixt the rails
The little Pepe showed his two black beads,
His flat-ringed hair and small Semitic nose,
Complete and tiny as a new-born minnow ;

Patting his head and holding in her arms
 The baby senior, stood Lorenzo's wife
 All negligent, her kerchief discomposed
 By little clutches, woman's coquetry
 Quite turned to mother's cares and sweet content.
 These on the balcony, while at the door
 Gazed the lank boys and lazy-shouldered men.
 'T is likely too the rats and insects peeped,
 Being southern Spanish ready for a lounge.
 The singer smiled, as doubtless Orpheus smiled,
 To see the animals both great and small,
 The mountainous elephant and scampering mouse,
 Held by the ears in decent audience ;
 Then, when mine host desired the strain once more,
 He fell to preluding with rhythmic change
 Of notes recurrent, soft as pattering drops
 That fall from off the eaves in faëry dance
 When clouds are breaking ; till at measured pause
 He struck with strength, in rare responsive chords.]

Host.

Come, then, a gayer ballad, if thou wilt :
 I quarrel not with change. What say you, Captain ?

LOPEZ.

All's one to me. I note no change of tune,
 Not I, save in the ring of horses' hoofs,
 Or in the drums and trumpets when they call
 To action or retreat. I ne'er could see
 The good of singing.

BLASCO.

Why, it passes time —
 Saves you from getting over-wise : that's good.
 For, look you, fools are merry here below,
 Yet they will go to heaven all the same,
 Having the sacraments ; and, look you, heaven
 Is a long holiday, and solid men,
 Used to much business, might be ill at ease
 Not liking play. And so, in travelling,

I shape myself betimes to idleness
And take fools' pleasures . . .

Host.

Hark, the song begins!

JUAN (*sings*).

*Maiden, crowned with glossy blackness,
Lithe as panther forest-roaming,
Long-armed naiad, when she dances,
On a stream of ether floating —
Bright, O bright Fedalma!*

*Form all curves like softness drifted,
Wave-kissed marble roundly dimpling,
Far-off music slowly wingéd,
Gently rising, gently sinking —
Bright, O bright Fedalma!*

*Pure as rain-tear on a rose-leaf,
Cloud high-born in noonday spotless,
Sudden perfect as the dew-bead,
Gem of earth and sky begotten —
Bright, O bright Fedalma!*

*Beauty has no mortal father,
Holy light her form engendered
Out of tremor, yearning, gladness,
Presage sweet and joy remembered —
Child of Light, Fedalma!*

BLASCO.

Faith, a good song, sung to a stirring tune.
I like the words returning in a round;
It gives a sort of sense. Another such'

ROLDAN (*rising*).

Sirs, you will hear my boy. 'T is very hard
When gentles sing for nought to all the town.

How can a poor man live ? And now 't is time
I go to the Plaça — who will give me pence
When he can hear hidalgos and give nought ?

JUAN.

True, friend. Be pacified. I'll sing no more.
Go thou, and we will follow. Never fear.
My voice is common as the ivy-leaves,
Plucked in all seasons — bears no price ; thy boy's
Is like the almond blossoms. Ah, he 's lame !

Host.

Load him not heavily. Here, Pedro ! help.
Go with them to the Plaça, take the hoops.
The sights will pay thee.

BLASCO.

I'll be there anon,
And set the fashion with a good white coin.
But let us see as well as hear.

Host.

Ay, prithee.
Some tricks, a dance.

BLASCO.

Yes, 'tis more rational.

ROLDAN (*turning round with the bundle and monkey
on his shoulders*).

You shall see all, sirs. There 's no man in Spain
Knows his art better. I 've a twinging knee
Oft hinders dancing, and the boy is lame.
But no man's monkey has more tricks than mine.

[At this high praise the gloomy Annibal,
Mournful professor of high drollery,
Seemed to look gloomier, and the little troop

Went slowly out, escorted from the door
 By all the idlers. From the balcony
 Slowly subsided the black radiance
 Of agate eyes, and broke in chattering sounds,
 Coaxings and trampings, and the small hoarse squeak
 Of Pepe's reed. And our group talked again.]

Host.

I'll get this juggler, if he quits him well,
 An audience here as choice as can be lured.
 For me, when a poor devil does his best,
 'Tis my delight to soothe his soul with praise.
 What though the best be bad? remains the good
 Of throwing food to a lean hungry dog.
 I'd give up the best jugglery in life
 To see a miserable juggler pleased.
 But that's my humor. Crowds are malcontent
 And cruel as the Holy . . . Shall we go?
 All of us now together?

LOPEZ.

Well, not I.

I may be there anon, but first I go
 To the lower prison. There is strict command
 That all our gypsy prisoners shall to-night
 Be lodged within the fort. They've forged enough
 Of balls and bullets — used up all the metal.
 At morn to-morrow they must carry stones
 Up the south tower. 'T is a fine stalwart band,
 Fit for the hardest tasks. Some say, the queen
 Would have the Gypsies banished with the Jews.
 Some say, 't were better harness them for work.
 They'd feed on any filth and save the Spaniard.
 Some say — but I must go. 'T will soon be time
 To head the escort. We shall meet again.

BLASCO.

Go, sir, with God (*exit Lopez*). A very proper man,
 And soldierly. But, for this banishment
 Some men are hot on, it ill pleases me.

The Jews, now (sirs, if any Christian here
 Had Jews for ancestors, I blame him not ;
 We cannot all be Goths of Aragon) —
 Jews are not fit for heaven, but on earth
 They are most useful. 'T is the same with mules,
 Horses, or oxen, or with any pig
 Except Saint Anthony's. They are useful here
 (The Jews, I mean) though they may go to hell.
 And, look you, useful sins — why Providence
 Sends Jews to do 'em, saving Christian souls.
 The very Gypsies, curbed and harnessed well,
 Would make draught cattle, feed on vermin too,
 Cost less than grazing brutes, and turn bad food
 To handsome carcasses ; sweat at the forge
 For little wages, and well drilled and flogged
 Might work like slaves, some Spaniards looking on.
 I deal in plate, and am no priest to say
 What God may mean, save when he means plain sense ;
 But when he sent the Gypsies wandering
 In punishment because they sheltered not
 Our Lady and Saint Joseph (and no doubt
 Stole the small ass they fled with into Egypt),
 Why send them here ? 'T is plain he saw the use
 They 'd be to Spaniards. Shall we banish them,
 And tell God we know better ? 'T is a sin.
 They talk of vermin ; but, sirs, vermin large
 Were made to eat the small, or else to eat
 The noxious rubbish, and picked Gypsy men
 Might serve in war to climb, be killed, and fall
 To make an easy ladder. Once I saw
 A Gypsy sorcerer, at a spring and grasp
 Kill one who came to seize him : talk of strength !
 Nay, swiftness too, for while we crossed ourselves
 He vanished like — say, like . . .

JUAN.

A swift black snake,
 Or like a living arrow fledged with will.

BLASCO.

Why, did you see him, pray ?

JUAN.

Not then, but now,
As painters see the many in the one.
We have a Gypsy in Bedmár whose frame
Nature compacted with such fine selection,
'T would yield a dozen types: all Spanish knights,
From him who slew Rolando at the pass
Up to the mighty Cid; all deities,
Thronging Olympus in fine attitudes;
Or all hell's heroes whom the poet saw
Tremble like lions, writhe like demigods.

Host.

Pause not yet, Juan — more hyperbole!
Shoot upward still and flare in meteors
Before thou sink to earth in dull brown fact.

BLASCO.

Nay, give me fact, high shooting suits not me.
I never stare to look for soaring larks.
What is this Gypsy?

Host.

Chieftain of a band,
The Moor's allies, whom full a month ago
Our Duke surprised and brought as captives home.
He needed smiths, and doubtless the brave Moor
Has missed some useful scouts and archers too.
Juan's fantastic pleasure is to watch
These Gypsies forging, and to hold discourse
With this great chief, whom he transforms at will
To sage or warrior, and like the sun
Plays daily at fallacious alchemy,
Turns sand to gold, and dewy spider-webs
To myriad rainbows. Still the sand is sand,
And still in sober shade you see the web.
'T is so, I'll wager, with his Gypsy chief —
A piece of stalwart cunning, nothing more.

JUAN.

No ! My invention has been all too poor
To frame this Zarca as I saw him first.
'T was when they stripped him. In his chieftain's gear,
Amidst his men he seemed a royal barb
Followed by wild-maned Andalusian colts.
He had a necklace of a strange device
In finest gold of unknown workmanship,
But delicate as Moorish, fit to kiss
Fedalma's neck, and play in shadows there.
He wore fine mail, a rich-wrought sword and belt,
And on his surcoat black a brodered torch,
A pine-branch flaming, grasped by two dark hands.
But when they stripped him of his ornaments
It was the baubles lost their grace, not he.
His eyes, his mouth, his nostril, all inspired
With scorn that mastered utterance of scorn,
With power to check all rage until it turned
To ordered force, unleashed on chosen prey —
It seemed the soul within him made his limbs
And made them grand. The baubles were well gone.
He stood the more a king, when bared to man.

BLASCO.

Maybe. But nakedness is bad for trade,
And is not decent. Well-wrought metal, sir,
Is not a bauble. Had you seen the camp,
The royal camp at Velez Malaga,
Ponce de Leon and the other dukes,
The king himself and all his thousand knights
For bodyguard, 't would not have left you breath
To praise a Gypsy thus. A man's a man ;
But when you see a king, you see the work
Of many thousand men. King Ferdinand
Bears a fine presence, and hath proper limbs ;
But what though he were shrunken as a relic ?
You'd see the gold and gems that cased him o'er,
And all the pages round him in brocade,
And all the lords, themselves a sort of kings,
Doing him reverence. That strikes an awe
Into a common man — especially
A judge of plate.

Host.

Faith, very wisely said.
Purge thy speech, Juan. It is over-full
Of this same Gypsy. Praise the Catholic King.
And come now, let us see the juggler's skill.

The Plaza Santiago.

'Tis daylight still, but now the golden cross
Uplifted by the angel on the dome
Stands rayless in calm color clear-defined
Against the northern blue; from turrets high
The fitting splendor sinks with folded wing
Dark-hid till morning, and the battlements
Wear soft relenting whiteness mellowed o'er
By summers generous and winters bland.
Now in the east the distance casts its veil
And gazes with a deepening earnestness.
The old rain-fretted mountains in their robes
Of shadow-broken gray; the rounded hills
Reddened with blood of Titans, whose huge limbs,
Entombed within, feed full the hardy flesh
Of cactus green and blue broad-sworded aloes;
The cypress soaring black above the lines
Of white court-walls; the jointed sugar-canes
Pale-golden with their feathers motionless
In the warm quiet:—all thought-teaching form
Utters itself in firm unshimmering hues.
For the great rock has screened the westering sun
That still on plains beyond streams vaporous gold
Among the branches; and within Bedmár
Has come the time of sweet serenity
When color grows unglittering, and the soul
Of visible things shows silent happiness,
As that of lovers trusting though apart.
The ripe-cheeked fruits, the crimson-petalled flowers;
The wingéd life that pausing seems a gem
Cunningly carven on the dark green leaf;
The face of man with hues supremely blent
To difference fine as of a voice 'mid sounds:—
Each lovely light-dipped thing seems to emerge
Flushed gravely from baptismal sacrament.

All beauteous existence rests, yet wakes,
Lies still, yet conscious, with clear open eyes
And gentle breath and mild suffused joy.
'Tis day, but day that falls like melody
Repeated on a string with graver tones —
Tones such as linger in a long farewell.

The Plaça widens in the passive air —
The Plaça Santiago, where the church,
A mosque converted, shows an eyeless face
Red-checked, faded, doing penance still —
Bearing with Moorish arch the imaged saint.
Apostle, baron, Spanish warrior,
Whose charge's hoofs trample the turbaned dead,
Whose banner with the Cross, the bloody sword
Flashes athwart the Moslem's glazing eye,
And mocks his trust in Allah who forsakes.
Up to the church the Plaça gently slopes,
In shape most like the pious palmer's shell,
Girdled with low white houses ; high above
Tower the strong fortress and sharp-angled wall
And well-flanked castle gate. From o'er the roofs,
And from the shadowed pátios cool, there spreads
The breath of flowers and aromatic leaves
Soothing the sense with bliss indefinite —
A baseless hope, a glad presentiment,
That curves the lip more softly, fills the eye
With more indulgent beam. And so it soothes,
So gently sways the pulses of the crowd
Who make a zone about the central spot
Chosen by Roldan for his theatre.
Maids with arched eyebrows, delicate-pencilled, dark,
Fold their round arms below the kerchief full ;
Men shoulder little girls ; and grandames gray,
But muscular still, hold babies on their arms ;
While mothers keep the stout-legged boys in front
Against their skirts, as old Greek pictures show
The Glorious Mother with the Boy divine.
Youths keep the places for themselves, and roll
Large lazy eyes, and call recumbent dogs
(For reasons deep below the reach of thought).
The old men cough with purpose, wish to hint
Wisdom within that cheapens jugglery,
Maintain a neutral air, and knit their brows

In observation. None are quarrelsome,
 Noisy, or very merry; for their blood
 Moves slowly into fervor — they rejoice
 Like those dark birds that sweep with heavy wing,
 Cheering their mates with melancholy cries.

But now the gilded balls begin to play
 In rhythmic numbers, ruled by practice fine
 Of eye and muscle: all the juggler's form
 Consents harmonious in swift-gliding change,
 Easily forward stretched or backward bent
 With lightest step and movement circular
 Round a fixed point: 'tis not the old Roldan now,
 The dull, hard, weary, miserable man,
 The soul all parched to languid appetite
 And memory of desire: 'tis wondrous force
 That moves in combination multiform
 Towards conscious ends: 'tis Roldan glorious,
 Holding all eyes like any meteor,
 King of the moment save when Annibal
 Divides the scene and plays the comic part,
 Gazing with blinking glances up and down
 Dancing and throwing nought and catching it,
 With mimicry as merry as the tasks
 Of penance-working shades in Tartarus.

Pablo stands passive, and a space apart,
 Holding a viol, waiting for command.
 Music must not be wasted, but must rise
 As needed climax; and the audience
 Is growing with late comers. Juan now,
 And the familiar Host, with Blasco broad,
 Find way made gladly to the inmost round
 Studded with heads. Lorenzo knits the crowd
 Into one family by showing all
 Good-will and recognition. Juan casts
 His large and rapid-measuring glance around;
 But — with faint quivering, transient as a breath
 Shaking a flame — his eyes make sudden pause
 Where by the jutting angle of a street
 Castle-ward leading, stands a female form,
 A kerchief pale square-drooping o'er the brow,
 About her shoulders dim brown serge — in garb
 Most like a peasant woman from the vale,

Who might have lingered after marketing
 To see the show. What thrill mysterious,
 Ray-borne from orb to orb of conscious eyes,
 The swift observing sweep of Juan's glance
 Arrests an instant, then with prompting fresh
 Diverts it lastingly? He turns at once
 To watch the gilded balls, and nod and smile
 At little round Pepita, blondest maid
 In all Bedmár — Pepita, fair yet flecked,
 Saucy of lip and nose, of hair as red
 As breasts of robins stepping on the snow —
 Who stands in front with little tapping feet,
 And baby-dimpled hands that hide enclosed
 Those sleeping crickets, the dark castanets.
 But soon the gilded balls have ceased to play
 And Annibal is leaping through the hoops,
 That turn to twelve, meeting him as he flies
 In the swift circle. Shuddering he leaps,
 But with each spring flies swift and swifter still
 To loud and louder shouts, while the great hoops
 Are changed to smaller. Now the crowd is fired.
 The motion swift, the living victim urged,
 The imminent failure and repeated scape
 Hurry all pulses and intoxicate
 With subtle wine of passion many-mixt.
 'Tis all about a monkey leaping hard
 Till near to gasping; but it serves as well
 As the great circus or arena dire,
 Where these are lacking. Roldan cautiously
 Slackens the leaps and lays the hoops to rest,
 And Annibal retires with reeling brain
 And backward stagger — pity, he could not smile.

Now Roldan spreads his carpet, now he shows
 Strange metamorphoses: the pebble black
 Changes to whitest egg within his hand;
 A staring rabbit, with retreating ears,
 Is swallowed by the air and vanishes;
 He tells men's thoughts about the shaken dice,
 Their secret choosing; makes the white beans pass
 With causeless act sublime from cup to cup
 Turned empty on the ground — diablerie
 That pales the girls and puzzles all the boys:
 These tricks are samples, hinting to the town

Roldan's great mastery. He tumbles next,
 And Annibal is called to mock each feat
 With arduous comicality and save
 By rule romantic the great public mind
 (And Roldan's body) from too serious strain.

But with the tumbling, lest the feats should fail,
 And so need veiling in a haze of sound,
 Pablo awakes the viol and the bow —
 The masculine bow that draws the woman's heart
 From out the strings and makes them cry, yearn, plead,
 Tremble, exult, with mystic union
 Of joy acute and tender suffering.
 To play the viol and discreetly mix
 Alternate with the bow's keen biting tones
 The throb responsive to the finger's touch,
 Was rarest skill that Pablo half had caught
 From an old blind and wandering Catalan ;
 The other half was rather heritage
 From treasure stored by generations past
 In winding chambers of receptive sense.

The wingéd sounds exalt the thick-pressed crowd
 With a new pulse in common, blending all
 The gazing life into one larger soul
 With dimly widened consciousness : as waves
 In heightened movement tell of waves far off.
 And the light changes ; westward stationed clouds,
 The sun's ranged outposts, luminous message spread,
 Rousing quiescent things to doff their shade
 And show themselves as added audience.
 Now Pablo, letting fall the eager bow,
 Solicits softer murmurs from the strings,
 And now above them pours a wondrous voice
 (Such as Greek reapers heard in Sicily)
 With wounding rapture in it, like love's arrows :
 And clear upon clear air as colored gems
 Dropped in a crystal cup of water pure,
 Fall words of sadness, simple, lyrical :

*Spring comes hither,
 Buds the rose ;
 Roses wither,
 Sweet spring goes.*

*Summer soars —
Wide-winged day
White light pours,
Flies away.
Ojalà, would he carry me!*

*Soft winds blow,
Westward born,
Onward go
Toward the morn.
Ojalà, would they carry me!*

*Sweet birds sing
O'er the graves,
Then take wing
O'er the waves.
Ojalà, would they carry me!*

When the voice paused and left the viol's note
To plead forsaken, 't was as when a cloud
Hiding the sun, makes all the leaves and flowers
Shiver. But when with measured change the strings
Had taught regret new longing, clear again,
Welcome as hope recovered, flowed the voice.

*Warm whispering through the slender olive leaves
Came to me a gentle sound,
Whispering of a secret found
In the clear sunshine 'mid the golden sheaves:
Said it was sleeping for me in the morn,
Called it gladness, called it joy,
Drew me on — "Come hither, boy" —
To where the blue wings rested on the corn.
I thought the gentle sound had whispered true —
Thought the little heaven mine,
Leaned to clutch the thing divine,
And saw the blue wings melt within the blue.*

The long notes linger on the trembling air,
With subtle penetration enter all
The myriad corridors of the passionate soul,
Message-like spread, and answering action rouse.

Not angular jigs that warm the chilly limbs
In hoary northern mists, but action curved
To soft andante strains pitched plaintively.
Vibrations sympathetic stir all limbs :
Old men live backward in their dancing prime,
And move in memory ; small legs and arms
With pleasant agitation purposeless
Go up and down like pretty fruits in gales.
All long in common for the expressive act
Yet wait for it ; as in the olden time
Men waited for the bard to tell their thought.
"The dance ! the dance !" is shouted all around.
Now Pablo lifts the bow, Pepita now,
Ready as bird that sees the sprinkled corn,
When Juan nods and smiles, puts forth her foot
And lifts her arm to wake the castanets.
Juan advances, too, from out the ring
And bends to quit his lute ; for now the scene
Is empty ; Roldan weary, gathers pence,
Followed by Annibal with purse and stick.
The carpet lies a colored isle untrod,
Inviting feet : "The dance, the dance," resounds,
The bow entreats with slow melodic strain,
And all the air with expectation yearns.

Sudden, with gliding motion like a flame
That through dim vapor makes a path of glory,
A figure lithe, all white and saffron-robed,
Flashed right across the circle, and now stood
With ripened arms uplift and regal head,
Like some tall flower whose dark and intense heart
Lies half within a tulip-tinted cup.

Juan stood fixed and pale ; Pepita stepped
Backward within the ring : the voices fell
From shouts insistent to more passive tones
Half meaning welcome, half astonishment.
"Lady Fedalina ! — will she dance for us ?"

But she, sole swayed by impulse passionate,
Feeling all life was music and all eyes
The warning quickening light that music makes,
Moved as, in dance religious, Miriam,

When on the Red Sea shore she raised her voice
And led the chorus of the people's joy ;
Or as the Trojan maids that reverent sang
Watching the sorrow-crownéd Hecuba :
Moved in slow curves voluminous, gradual,
Feeling and action flowing into one,
In Eden's natural taintless marriage-bond ;
Ardently modest, sensuously pure,
With young delight that wonders at itself
And throbs as innocent as opening flowers,
Knowing not comment — soiless, beautiful.
The spirit in her gravely glowing face
With sweet community informs her limbs,
Filling their fine gradation with the breath
Of virgin majesty ; as full vowelled words
Are new impregnate with the master's thought.
Even the chance-strayed delicate tendrils black,
That backward 'scape from out her wreathing hair —
Even the pliant folds that cling transverse
When with obliquely soaring bend altern
She seems a goddess quitting earth again —
Gather expression — a soft undertone
And resonance exquisite from the grand chord
Of her harmoniously bodied soul.

At first a reverential silence guards
The eager senses of the gazing crowd :
They hold their breath, and live by seeing her.
But soon the admiring tension finds relief —
Sighs of delight, applausive murmurs low,
And stirrings gentle as of earéd corn
Or seed-bent grasses, when the ocean's breath
Spreads landward. Even Juan is impelled
By the swift-travelling movement : fear and doubt
Give way before the hurrying energy ;
He takes his lute and strikes in fellowship,
Filling more full the rill of melody
Raised ever and anon to clearest flood
By Pablo's voice, that dies away too soon,
Like the sweet blackbird's fragmentary chant,
Yet wakes again, with varying rise and fall,
In songs that seem emergent memories
Prompting brief utterance — little *cancións*
And *villancicos*, Andalusia-born.

PABLO (*sings*).

*It was in the prime
Of the sweet Spring-time.
In the linnet's throat
Trembled the love-note,
And the love-stirred air
Thrilled the blossoms there.
Little shadows danced
Each a tiny elf,
Happy in large light
And the thinnest self.*

*It was but a minute
In a far-off Spring,
But each gentle thing,
Sweetly-wooing linnet,
Soft-thrilled hawthorn tree,
Happy shadowy elf
With the thinnest self,
Live still on in me.
O the sweet, sweet prime
Of the past Spring-time !*

And still the light is changing : high above
Float soft pink clouds ; others with deeper flush
Stretch like flamingos bending toward the south.
Comes a more solemn brilliance o'er the sky,
A meaning more intense upon the air —
The inspiration of the dying day.
And Juan now, when Pablo's notes subside,
Soothes the regretful ear, and breaks the pause
With masculine voice in deep antiphony.

JUAN (*sings*).

*Day is dying ! Float, O song,
Down the westward river,
Requiem chanting to the Day —
Day, the mighty Giver.*

*Pierced by shafts of Time he bleeds,
Melted rubies sending
Through the river and the sky.*

*All the long-drawn earthy banks
Up to cloud-land lifting :
Slow between them drifts the swan,
'Twixt two heavens drifting.*

*Wings half open, like a flow'r
Inly deeper flushing,
Neck and breast as virgin's pure—
Virgin proudly blushing.*

*Day is dying ! Float, O swan,
Down the ruby river ;
Follow, song, in requiem
To the mighty Giver.*

The exquisite hour, the ardor of the crowd,
The strains more plenteous, and the gathering night
Of action passionate where no effort is,
But self's poor gates open to rushing power
That blends the inward ebb and outward vast —
All gathering influences culminate
And urge Fedalma. Earth and heaven seem one,
Life a glad trembling on the outer edge
Of unknown rapture. Swifter now she moves,
Filling the measure with a double beat
And widening circle ; now she seems to glow
With more declaréd presence, glorified.
Circling, she lightly bends and lifts on high
The multitudinous-sounding tambourine,
And makes it ring and boom, then lifts it higher
Stretching her left arm beauteous ; now the crowd
Exultant shouts, forgetting poverty
In the rich moment of possessing her.

But sudden, at one point, the exultant throng
Is pushed and hustled, and then thrust apart :
Something approaches — something cuts the ring
Of jubilant idlers — startling as a streak
From alien wounds across the blooming flesh
Of careless sporting childhood. 'Tis the band
Of Gypsy prisoners. Soldiers lead the van
And make sparse flanking guard, aloof surveyed
By gallant Lopez, stringent in command.

The Gypsies chained in couples, all save one,
 Walk in dark file with grand bare legs and arms
 And savage melancholy in their eyes
 That star-like gleam from out black clouds of hair;
 Now they are full in sight, and now they stretch
 Right to the centre of the open space.
 Fedalma now, with gentle wheeling sweep
 Returning, like the loveliest of the Hours
 Strayed from her sisters, truant lingering,
 Faces again the centre, swings again
 The uplifted tambourine. . . .

When lo ! with sound
 Stupendous throbbing, solemn as a voice
 Sent by the invisible choir of all the dead,
 Tolls the great passing bell that calls to prayer
 For souls departed : at the mighty beat
 It seems the light sinks awe-struck — 'tis the note
 Of the sun's burial ; speech and action pause ;
 Religious silence and the holy sign
 Of everlasting memories (the sign
 Of death that turned to more diffusive life)
 Pass o'er the Plaça. Little children gaze
 With lips apart, and feel the unknown god ;
 And the most men and women pray. Not all.
 The soldiers pray ; the Gypsies stand unmoved
 As pagan statues with proud level gaze.
 But he who wears a solitary chain
 Heading the file, has turned to face Fedalma.
 She motionless, with arm uplifted, guards
 The tambourine aloft (lest, sudden-lowered,
 Its trivial jingle mar the duteous pause),
 Reveres the general prayer, but prays not, stands
 With level glance meeting that Gypsy's eyes,
 That seem to her the sadness of the world
 Rebuking her, the great bell's hidden thought
 Now first unveiled — the sorrows unredeemed
 Of races outcast, scorned, and wandering.
 Why does he look at her ? why she at him ?
 As if the meeting light between their eyes
 Made permanent union ? His deep-knit brow,
 Inflated nostril, scornful lip compressed,
 Seem a dark hieroglyph of coming fate
 Written before her. Father Isidor
 Had terrible eyes and was her enemy ;

She knew it and defied him ; all her soul
Rounded and hardened in its separateness
When they encountered. But this prisoner —
This Gypsy, passing, gazing casually —
Was he her enemy too ? She stood all quelled,
The impetuous joy that hurried in her veins
Seemed backward rushing turned to chilliest awe,
Uneasy wonder, and a vague self-doubt.
The minute brief stretched measureless, dream-filled
By a dilated new-fraught consciousness.

Now it was gone ; the pious murmur ceased,
The Gypsies all moved onward at command
And careless noises blent confusedly.
But the ring closed again, and many ears
Waited for Pablo's music, many eyes
Turned towards the carpet : it lay bare and dim,
Twilight was there — the bright Fedalma gone.

*A handsome room in the Castle. On the table a rich
jewel-casket.*

Silva had doffed his mail and with it all
The heavier harness of his warlike cares.
He had not seen Fedalma ; miser-like
He hoarded through the hour a costlier joy
By longing oft-repressed. Now it was earned ;
And with observance wonted he would send
To ask admission. Spanish gentlemen
Who wooed fair dames of noble ancestry
Did homage with rich tunics and slashed sleeves
And outward-surging linen's costly snow ;
With brodered scarf transverse, and rosary
Handsomely wrought to fit high-blooded prayer ;
So hinting in how deep respect they held
That self they threw before their lady's feet.
And Silva — that Fedalma's rate should stand
No jot below the highest, that her love
Might seem to all the royal gift it was —
Turned every trifle in his mien and garb
To scrupulous language, uttering to the world
That since she loved him he went carefully,
Bearing a thing so precious in his hand.
A man of high-wrought strain, fastidious

In his acceptance, dreading all delight
That speedy dies and turns to carrion:
His senses much exacting, deep instilled
With keen imagination's airy needs;—
Like strong-limbed monsters studded o'er with eyes,
Their hunger checked by overwhelming vision,
Or that fierce lion in symbolic dream
Snatched from the ground by wings and new-endowed
With a man's thought-propelled relenting heart.
Silva was both the lion and the man;
First hesitating shrank, then fiercely sprang,
Or having sprung, turned pallid at his deed
And loosed the prize, paying his blood for nought.
A nature half-transformed, with qualities
That oft bewrayed each other, elements
Not blent but struggling, breeding strange effects,
Passing the reckoning of his friends or foes.
Haughty and generous, grave and passionate;
With tidal moments of devoutest awe,
Sinking anon to farthest ebb of doubt;
Deliberating ever, till the sting
Of a recurrent ardor made him rush
Right against reasons that himself had drilled
And marshalled painfully. A spirit framed
Too proudly special for obedience,
Too subtly pondering for mastery:
Born of a goddess with a mortal sire,
Heir of flesh-fettered, weak divinity,
Doom-gifted with long resonant consciousness
And perilous heightening of the sentient soul.
But look less curiously: life itself
May not express us all, may leave the worst
And the best too, like tunes in mechanism
Never awaked. In various catalogues
Objects stand variously. Silva stands
As a young Spaniard, handsome, noble, brave,
With titles many, high in pedigree;
Or, as a nature quiveringly poised
In reach of storms, whose qualities may turn
To murdered virtues that still walk as ghosts
Within the shuddering soul and shriek remorse;
Or, as a lover In the screening time
Of purple blossoms, when the petals crowd
And softly crush like cherub cheeks in heaven,

Who thinks of greenly withered fruit and worms ?
O the warm southern spring is beauteous !
And in love's spring all good seems possible :
No threats, all promise, brooklets ripple full
And bathe the rushes, vicious crawling things
Are pretty eggs, the sun shines graciously
And parches not, the silent rain beats warm
As childhood's kisses, days are young and grow,
And earth seems in its sweet beginning time
Fresh made for two who live in Paradise.
Silva is in love's spring, its freshness breathed
Within his soul along the dusty ways
While marching homeward ; 't is around him now
As in a garden fenced in for delight, —
And he may seek delight. Smiling he lifts
A whistle from his belt, but lets it fall
Ere it has reached his lips, jarred by the sound
Of ushers' knocking, and a voice that craves
Admission for the Prior of San Domingo.

PRIOR (*entering*).

You look perturbed, my son. I thrust myself
Between you and some beckoning intent
That wears a face more smiling than my own.

DON SILVA.

Father, enough that you are here. I wait,
As always, your commands — nay, should have sought
An early audience.

PRIOR.

To give, I trust,
Good reasons for your change of policy ?

DON SILVA.

Strong reasons, father.

PRIOR.

Ay, but are they good ?
I have known reasons strong, but strongly evil.

DON SILVA.

'Tis possible. I but deliver mine
 To your strict judgment. Late despatches sent
 With urgency by the Count of Bavien,
 No hint on my part prompting, with besides
 The testified concurrence of the king
 And our Grand Master, have made peremptory
 The course which else had been but rational.
 Without the forces furnished by allies
 The siege of Guadix would be madness. More,
 El Zagal has his eyes upon Bedmár:
 Let him attempt it: in three weeks from hence
 The Master and the Lord of Aguilar
 Will bring their forces. We shall catch the Moors,
 The last gleaned clusters of their bravest men,
 As in a trap. You have my reasons, father.

PRIOR.

And they sound well. But free-tongued rumor adds
 A pregnant supplement — in substance this:
 That inclination snatches arguments
 To make indulgence seem judicious choice;
 That you, commanding in God's Holy War,
 Lift prayers to Satan to retard the fight
 And give you time for feasting — wait a siege,
 Call daring enterprise impossible,
 Because you'd marry. You, a Spanish duke,
 Christ's general, would marry like a clown,
 Who, selling fodder dearer for the war,
 Is all the merrier; nay, like the brutes,
 Who know no awe to check their appetite,
 Coupling 'mid heaps of slain, while still in front
 The battle rages.

DON SILVA.

Rumor on your lips
 Is eloquent, father.

PRIOR.

Is she true?

DON SILVA.

Perhaps.

I seek to justify my public acts
 And not my private joy. Before the world
 Enough if I am faithful in command,
 Betray not by my deeds, swerve from no task
 My knightly vows constrain me to : herein
 I ask all men to test me.

PRIOR.

Knightly vows ?

Is it by their constraint that you must marry ?

DON SILVA.

Marriage is not a breach of them. I use
 A sanctioned liberty . . . your pardon, father,
 I need not teach you what the Church decrees.
 But facts may weaken texts, and so dry up
 The fount of eloquence. The Church relaxed
 Our Order's rule before I took the vows.

PRIOR.

Ignoble liberty ! you snatch your rule
 From what God tolerates, not what he loves ? —
 Inquire what lowest offering may suffice,
 Cheapen it meanly to an obolus,
 Buy, and then count the coin left in your purse
 For your debauch ? — Measure obedience
 By scantest powers of brethren whose frail flesh
 Our Holy Church indulges ? — Ask great Law,
 The rightful Sovereign of the human soul,
 For what it pardons, not what it commands ?
 O fallen knighthood, penitent of high vows,
 Asking a charter to degrade itself !
 Such poor apology of rules relaxed
 Blunts not suspicion of that doubleness
 Your enemies tax you with.

DON SILVA.

Oh, for the rest,

Conscience is harder than our enemies,

Knows more, accuses with more nicety,
Nor needs to question Rumor if we fall
Below the perfect model of our thought.
I fear no outward arbiter. — You smile ?

PRIOR.

Ay, at the contrast 'twixt your portraiture
And the true image of your conscience, shown
As now I see it in your acts. I see
A drunken sentinel who gives alarm
At his own shadow, but when scalers snatch
His weapon from his hand smiles idiot-like
At games he's dreaming of.

DON SILVA.

A parable !

The husk is rough — holds something bitter, doubtless.

PRIOR.

Oh, the husk gapes with meaning over-ripe.
You boast a conscience that controls your deeds,
Watches your knightly armor, guards your rank
From stain of treachery — you, helpless slave,
Whose will lies nerveless in the clutch of lust —
Of blind mad passion — passion itself most helpless,
Storm-driven, like the monsters of the sea.
O famous conscience !

DON SILVA.

Pause there ! Leave unsaid

Aught that will match that text. More were too much,
Even from holy lips. I own no love
But such as guards my honor, since it guards
Hers whom I love ! I suffer no foul words
To stain the gift I lay before her feet ;
And, being hers, my honor is more safe.

PRIOR.

Verse-makers' talk ! fit for a world of rhymes,
Where facts are feigned to tickle idle ears,

Where good and evil play at tournament
 And end in amity — a world of lies —
 A carnival of words where every year
 Stale falsehoods serve fresh men. Your honor safe?
 What honor has a man with double bonds?
 Honor is shifting as the shadows are
 To souls that turn their passions into laws.
 A Christian knight who weds an infidel

DON SILVA (*fiercely*).

An infidel!

PRIOR.

May one day spurn the Cross,
 And call that honor! — one day find his sword
 Stained with his brother's blood, and call that honor!
 Apostates' honor? — harlot's chastity!
 Renegades' faithfulness? — Iscariot's!

DON SILVA.

Strong words and burning; but they scorch not me.
 Fedalma is a daughter of the Church —
 Has been baptized and nurtured in the faith.

PRIOR.

Ay, as a thousand Jewesses, who yet
 Are brides of Satan in a robe of flames.

DON SILVA.

Fedalma is no Jewess, bears no marks
 That tell of Hebrew blood.

PRIOR.

She bears the marks
 Of races unbaptized, that never bowed
 Before the holy signs, were never moved
 By stirrings of the sacramental gifts.

DON SILVA (*scornfully*).

Holy accusers practise palmistry,
 And, other witness lacking, read the skin.

PRIOR.

I read a record deeper than the skin.
 What! Shall the trick of nostrils and of lips
 Descend through generations, and the soul
 That moves within our frame like God in worlds —
 Convulsing, urging, melting, withering —
 Imprint no record, leave no documents,
 Of her great history? Shall men bequeath
 The fancies of their palate to their sons,
 And shall the shudder of restraining awe,
 The slow-wept tears of contrite memory,
 Faith's prayerful labor, and the food divine
 Of fasts ecstatic — shall these pass away
 Like wind upon the waters, tracklessly?
 Shall the mere curl of eyelashes remain,
 And god-enshrining symbols leave no trace
 Of tremors reverent? — That maiden's blood
 Is as unchristian as the leopard's.

DON SILVA.

Say,
 Unchristian as the Blessed Virgin's blood
 Before the angel spoke the word, "All hail!"

PRIOR (*smiling bitterly*).

Said I not truly? See, your passion weaves
 Already blasphemies!

DON SILVA.

'T is you provoke them.

PRIOR.

I strive, as still the Holy Spirit strives,
 To move the will perverse. But, failing this,
 God commands other means to save our blood,
 To save Castilian glory — nay, to save
 The name of Christ from blot of traitorous deeds

DON SILVA.

Of traitorous deeds ! Age, kindred, and your cowl,
 Give an ignoble license to your tongue.
 As for your threats, fulfil them at your peril.
 'Tis you, not I, will gibbet our great name
 To rot in infamy. If I am strong
 In patience now, trust me, I can be strong
 Then in defiance.

PRIOR.

Miserable man !

Your strength will turn to anguish, like the strength
 Of fallen angels. Can you change your blood ?
 You are a Christian, with the Christian awe
 In every vein. A Spanish noble, born
 To serve your people and your people's faith.
 Strong, are you ? Turn your back upon the Cross —
 Its shadow is before you. Leave your place :
 Quit the great ranks of knighthood : you will walk
 For ever with a tortured double self,
 A self that will be hungry while you feast,
 Will blush with shame while you are glorified,
 Will feel the ache and chill of desolation,
 Even in the very bosom of your love.
 Mate yourself with this woman, fit for what ?
 To make the sport of Moorish palaces,
 A lewd Herodias . . .

DON SILVA.

Stop ! no other man,
 Priest though he were, had had his throat left free
 For passage of those words. I would have clutched
 His serpent's neck, and flung him out to hell !
 A monk must needs defile the name of love :
 He knows it but as tempting devils paint it.
 You think to scare my love from its resolve
 With arbitrary consequences, strained
 By rancorous effort from the thinnest motives
 Of possibility ? — cite hideous lists
 Of sins irrelevant, to frighten me
 With bugbears' names, as women fright a child ?

Poor pallid wisdom, taught by inference
 From blood-drained life, where phantom terrors rule,
 And all achievement is to leave undone !
 Paint the day dark, make sunshine cold to me,
 Abolish the earth's fairness, prove it all
 A fiction of my eyes — then, after that,
 Profane Fedalma.

PRIOR.

O there is no need :
 She has profaned herself. Go, raving man,
 And see her dancing now. Go, see your bride
 Flaunting her beauties grossly in the gaze
 Of vulgar idlers — eking out the show
 Made in the Plaza by a mountebank.
 I hinder you no farther.

DON SILVA.

It is false !

PRIOR.

Go, prove it false, then.

[Father Isidor
 Drew on his cowl and turned away. The face
 That flashed anathemas, in swift eclipse
 Seemed Silva's vanished confidence. In haste
 He rushed unsignalled through the corridor
 To where the Duchess once, Fedalma now,
 Had residence retired from din of arms —
 Knocked, opened, found all empty — said
 With muffled voice, "Fedalma !" — called more loud,
 More oft on Iñez, the old trusted nurse —
 Then searched the terrace-garden, calling still,
 But heard no answering sound, and saw no face
 Save painted faces staring all unmoved
 By agitated tones. He hurried back,
 Giving half-conscious orders as he went
 To page and usher, that they straight should seek
 Lady Fedalma; then with stinging shame
 Wished himself silent; reached again the room
 Where still the Father's menace seemed to hang
 Thickening the air; snatched cloak and plumed hat,



"Fedalma entered, cast away the cloud
Of serge and linen, and, outbeaming bright,
Advanced a pace towards Silva."

And grasped, not knowing why, his poniard's hilt;
Then checked himself and said : —]

If he spoke truth !

To know were wound enough — to see the truth
Were fire upon the wound. It must be false !
His hatred saw amiss, or snatched mistake
In other men's report. I am a fool !
But where can she be gone ? gone secretly ?
And in my absence ? Oh, she meant no wrong !
I am a fool ! — But where can she be gone ?
With only Iñez ? Oh, she meant no wrong !
I swear she never meant it. There's no wrong
But she would make it momentary right
By innocence in doing it. . . .

And yet,

What is our certainty ? Why, knowing all
That is not secret. Mighty confidence !
One pulse of Time makes the base hollow — sends
The towering certainty we built so high
Toppling in fragments meaningless. What is —
What will be — must be — pooh ! they wait the key
Of that which is not yet ; all other keys
Are made of our conjectures, take their sense
From humors fooled by hope, or by despair.
Know what is good ? O God, we know not yet
If bliss itself is not young misery
With fangs swift growing. . . .

But some outward harm

May even now be hurting, grieving her.
Oh ! I must search — face shame — if shame be there.
Here, Perez ! hasten to Don Alvar — tell him
Lady Fedalma must be sought — is lost —
Has met, I fear, some mischance. He must send
Towards divers points. I go myself to seek
First in the town. . . .

[As Perez oped the door,

Then moved aside for passage of the Duke,
Fedalma entered, cast away the cloud
Of serge and linen, and outbeaming bright,
Advanced a pace towards Silva — but then paused,
For he had started and retreated ; she,
Quick and responsive as the subtle air

To change in him, divined that she must wait
 Until they were alone: they stood and looked.
 Within the Duke was struggling confluence
 Of feelings manifold — pride, anger, dread,
 Meeting in stormy rush with sense secure
 That she was present, with the new-stilled thirst
 Of gazing love, with trust inevitable
 As in beneficent virtues of the light
 And all earth's sweetness, that Fedalma's soul
 Was free from blemishing purpose. Yet proud wrath
 Leaped in dark flood above the purer stream
 That strove to drown it: Anger seeks its prey —
 Something to tear with sharp-edged tooth and claw,
 Likes not to go off hungry, leaving Love
 To feast on milk and honeycomb at will.
 Silva's heart said, he must be happy soon,
 She being there; but to be happy — first
 He must be angry, having cause. Yet love
 Shot like a stifled cry of tenderness
 All through the harshness he would fain have given
 To the dear word,]

DON SILVA.

Fedalma!

FEDALMA.

O my lord!

You are come back, and I was wandering!

DON SILVA (*coldly, but with suppressed agitation*).

You meant I should be ignorant.

FEDALMA.

Oh no,

I should have told you after — not before,
 Lest you should hinder me.

DON SILVA.

Then my known wish

Can make no hindrance?

FEDALMA (*archly*).

That depends
On what the wish may be. You wished me once
Not to uncage the birds. I meant to obey :
But in a moment something — something stronger,
Forced me to let them out. It did no harm.
They all came back again — the silly birds !
I told you, after.

DON SILVA (*with haughty coldness*).

Will you tell me now
What was the prompting stronger than my wish
That made you wander ?

FEDALMA (*advancing a step towards him, with a
sudden look of anxiety*).

Are you angry ?

DON SILVA (*smiling bitterly*).

A man deep-wounded may feel too much pain
To feel much anger.

Angry ?

FEDALMA (*still more anxiously*).

You — deep-wounded ?

DON SILVA.

Have I not made your place and dignity
The very heart of my ambition ? You —
No enemy could do it — you alone
Can strike it mortally.

Yes !

FEDALMA.

Nay, Silva, nay.
Has some one told you false ? I only went

To see the world with Iñez — see the town,
The people, everything. It was no harm.
I did not mean to dance: it happened so
At last . . .

DON SILVA.

O God, it's true then! — true that you,
A maiden nurtured as rare flowers are,
The very air of heaven sifted fine
Lest any mote should mar your purity,
Have flung yourself out on the dusty way
For common eyes to see your beauty soiled!
You own it true — you danced upon the Plaça?

FEDALMA (*proudly*).

Yes, it was true. I was not wrong to dance.
The air was filled with music, with a song
That seemed the voice of the sweet eventide —
The glowing light entering through eye and ear —
That seemed our love — mine, yours — they are but one —
Trembling through all my limbs, as fervent words
Tremble within my soul and must be spoken.
And all the people felt a common joy
And shouted for the dance. A brightness soft
As of the angels moving down to see
Illumined the broad space. The joy, the life
Around, within me, were one heaven: I longed
To blend them visibly: I longed to dance
Before the people — be as mounting flame
To all that burned within them! Nay, I danced;
There was no longing: I but did the deed
Being moved to do it.

(*As FEDALMA speaks, she and DON SILVA are gradually drawn nearer to each other.*)

Oh! I seemed new-waked
To life in unison with a multitude —
Feeling my soul upborne by all their souls,
Floating within their gladness! Soon I lost
All sense of separateness: Fedalma died
As a star dies, and melts into the light.
I was not, but joy was, and love and triumph.
Nay, my dear lord, I never could do aught

But I must feel you present. And once done,
Why, you must love it better than your wish.

I pray you, say so — say, it was not wrong!

*(While FEDALMA has been making this last appeal,
they have gradually come close together, and at
last embrace.)*

DON SILVA *(holding her hands)*.

Dangerous rebel! if the world without
Were pure as that within . . . but 't is a book
Wherein you only read the poesy
And miss all wicked meanings. Hence the need
For trust — obedience — call it what you will —
Towards him whose life will be your guard — towards me
Who now am soon to be your husband.

FEDALMA.

Yes!

That very thing that when I am your wife
I shall be something different, — shall be
I know not what, a Duchess with new thoughts —
For nobles never think like common men,
Nor wives like maidens (Oh, you wot not yet
How much I note, with all my ignorance) —
That very thing has made me more resolve
To have my will before I am your wife.
How can the Duchess ever satisfy
Fedalma's unwed eyes? and so to-day
I scolded ñez till she cried and went.

DON SILVA.

It was a guilty weakness: she knows well
That since you pleaded to be left more free
From tedious tendance and control of dames
Whose rank matched better with your destiny,
Her charge — my trust — was weightier.

FEDALMA.

Nay, my lord,

You must not blame her, dear old nurse. She cried.
Why, you would have consented too, at last.

I said such things ! I was resolved to go,
 And see the streets, the shops, the men at work,
 The women, little children — everything,
 Just as it is when nobody looks on.
 And I have done it ! We were out four hours.
 I feel so wise.

DON SILVA.

Had you but seen the town,
 You innocent naughtiness, not shown yourself —
 Shown yourself dancing — you bewilder me ! —
 Frustrate my judgment with strange negatives
 That seem like poverty, and yet are wealth
 In precious womanliness, beyond the dower
 Of other women : wealth in virgin gold,
 Outweighing all their petty currency.
 You daring modesty ! You shrink no more
 From gazing men, than from the gazing flowers
 That, dreaming sunshine, open as you pass.

FEDALMA.

No, I should like the world to look at me
 With eyes of love that make a second day.
 I think your eyes would keep the life in me
 Though I had nought to feed on else. Their blue
 Is better than the heavens — holds more love
 For me, Fedalma — is a little heaven
 For this one little world that looks up now.

DON SILVA.

O precious little world ! you make the heaven
 As the earth makes the sky. But, dear, all eyes,
 Though looking even on you, have not a glance
 That cherishes . . .

FEDALMA.

Ah no, I meant to tell you —
 Tell how my dancing ended with a pang.
 There came a man, one among many more,
 But *he* came first, with iron on his limbs.
 And when the bell tolled, and the people prayed,
 And I stood pausing — then he looked at me.

O Silva, such a man ! I thought he rose
 From the dark place of long-imprisoned souls,
 To say that Christ had never come to them.
 It was a look to shame a seraph's joy,
 And make him sad in heaven. It found me there —
 Seemed to have travelled far to find me there
 And grasp me — claim this festal life of mine
 As heritage of sorrow, chill my blood
 With the cold iron of some unknown bonds.
 The gladness hurrying full within my veins
 Was sudden frozen, and I danced no more.
 But, seeing you let loose the stream of joy,
 Mingling the present with the sweetest past.
 Yet, Silva, still I see him. Who is he ?
 Who are those prisoners with him ? Are they Moors ?

DON SILVA.

No, they are Gypsies, strong and cunning knaves,
 A double gain to us by the Moors' loss :
 The man you mean — their chief — is an ally
 The infidel will miss. His look might chase
 A herd of monks, and make them fly more swift
 Than from St. Jerome's lion. Such vague fear,
 Such bird-like tremors when that savage glance
 Turned full upon you in your height of joy
 Was natural, was not worth emphasis.
 Forget it, dear. This hour is worth whole days
 When we are sundered. Danger urges us
 To quick resolve.

FEDALMA.

What danger ? what resolve ?

I never felt chill shadow in my heart
 Until this sunset.

DON SILVA.

A dark enmity
 Plots how to sever us. And our defence
 Is speedy marriage, secretly achieved,
 Then publicly declared. Beseech you, dear,
 Grant me this confidence ; do my will in this,
 Trusting the reasons why I overset

All my own airy building raised so high
 Of bridal honors, marking when you step
 From off your maiden throne to come to me
 And bear the yoke of love. There is great need.
 I hastened home, carrying this prayer to you
 Within my heart. The bishop is my friend,
 Furthers our marriage, holds in enmity —
 Some whom we love not and who love not us.
 By this night's moon our priest will be despatched
 From Jaën. I shall march an escort strong
 To meet him. Ere a second sun from this
 Has risen — you consenting — we may wed.

FEDALMA.

None knowing that we wed ?

DON SILVA.

Beforehand none
 Save Iñez and Don Alvar. But the vows
 Once safely binding us, my household all
 Shall know you as their Duchess. No man then
 Can aim a blow at you but through my breast,
 And what stains you must stain our ancient name ;
 If any hate you I will take his hate,
 And wear it as a glove upon my helm ;
 Nay, God himself will never have the power
 To strike you solely and leave me unhurt,
 He having made us one. Now put the seal
 Of your dear lips on that.

FEDALMA.

A solemn kiss ? —
 Such as I gave you when you came that day
 From Córdoba, when first we said we loved ?
 When you had left the ladies of the Court
 For thirst to see me ; and you told me so,
 And then I seemed to know why I had lived.
 I never knew before. A kiss like that ?

DON SILVA.

Yes, yes, you face divine ! When was our kiss

FEDALMA.

Nay, I cannot tell
 What other kisses are. But that one kiss
 Remains upon my lips. The angels, spirits,
 Creatures with finer sense, may see it there.
 And now another kiss that will not die,
 Saying, To-morrow I shall be your wife!
*(They kiss, and pause a moment, looking earnestly
 in each other's eyes. Then FEDALMA, breaking
 away from DON SILVA, stands at a little distance
 from him with a look of roguish delight.)*

Now I am glad I saw the town to-day
 Before I am a Duchess — glad I gave
 This poor Fedalma all her wish. For once,
 Long years ago, I cried when Iñez said,
 "You are no more a little girl;" I grieved
 To part forever from that little girl
 And all her happy world so near the ground.
 It must be sad to outlive aught we love.
 So I shall grieve a little for these days
 Of poor unwed Fedalma. Oh, they are sweet,
 And none will come just like them. Perhaps the wind
 Wails so in winter for the summers dead,
 And all sad sounds are nature's funeral cries
 For what has been and is not. Are they, Silva?
*(She comes nearer to him again, and lays her hand
 on his arm, looking up at him with melancholy.)*

DON SILVA.

Why, dearest, you began in merriment,
 And end as sadly as a widowed bird.
 Some touch mysterious has new-tuned your soul
 To melancholy sequence. You soared high
 In that wild flight of rapture when you danced,
 And now you droop. 'Tis arbitrary grief,
 Surfeit of happiness, that mourns for loss
 Of unwed love, which does but die like seed
 For fuller harvest of our tenderness.
 We in our wedded life shall know no loss.
 We shall new-date our years. What went before
 Will be the time of promise, shadows, dreams;

But this, full revelation of great love.
 For rivers blent take in a broader heaven,
 And we shall blend our souls. Away with grief!
 When this dear head shall wear the double crown
 Of wife and Duchess — spiritually crowned
 With sworn espousal before God and man —
 Visibly crowned with jewels that bespeak
 The chosen sharer of my heritage —
 My love will gather perfectness, as thoughts
 That nourish us to magnanimity
 Grow perfect with more perfect utterance,
 Gathering full-shapen strength. And then these gem
 (DON SILVA draws FEDALMA towards the je
 casket on the table, and opens it.)

Helping the utterance of my soul's full choice,
 Will be the words made richer by just use,
 And have new meaning in their lustrousness.
 You know these jewels; they are precious signs
 Of long-transmitted honor, heightened still
 By worthy wearing; and I give them you —
 Ask you to take them — place our house's trust
 In her sure keeping whom my heart has found
 Worthiest, most beauteous. These rubies — see —
 Were falsely placed if not upon your brow.

(FEDALMA, while DON SILVA holds open
 casket, bends over it, looking at the jewels
 with delight.)

FEDALMA.

Ah, I remember them. In childish days
 I felt as if they were alive and breathed.
 I used to sit with awe and look at them.
 And now they will be mine! I'll put them on.
 Help me, my lord, and you shall see me now
 Somewhat as I shall look at Court with you.
 That we may know if I shall bear them well.
 I have a fear sometimes: I think your love
 Has never paused within your eyes to look,
 And only passes through them into mine.
 But when the Court is looking, and the queen,
 Your eyes will follow theirs. Oh, if you saw
 That I was other than you wished — 't were death!

DON SILVA (*taking up a jewel and placing it against her ear*).

Nay, let us try. Take out your ear-ring, sweet.
This ruby glows with longing for your ear.

FEDALMA (*taking out her ear-rings, and then lifting up the other jewels, one by one*).

Pray, fasten in the rubies.

(DON SILVA *begins to put in the ear-ring*.)

I was right!

These gems have life in them: their colors speak,
Say what words fail of. So do many things —
The scent of jasmine, and the fountain's plash,
The moving shadows on the far-off hills,
The slanting moonlight, and our clasping hands.
O Silva, there's an ocean round our words
That overflows and drowns them. Do you know
Sometimes when we sit silent, and the air
Breathes gently on us from the orange-trees,
It seems that with the whisper of a word
Our souls must shrink, get poorer, more apart.
Is it not true?

DON SILVA.

Yes, dearest, it is true.
Speech is but broken light upon the depth
Of the unspoken: even your loved words
Float in the larger meaning of your voice
As something dimmer.

(*He is still trying in vain to fasten the second ear-ring, while she has stooped again over the casket*.)

FEDALMA (*raising her head*).

Ah! your lordly hands
Will never fix that jewel. Let me try.
Women's small finger-tips have eyes.

DON SILVA.

No, no!

I like the task, only you must be still.

(She stands perfectly still, clasping her hands together while he fastens the second ear-ring. Sudden a clanking noise is heard without.)

FEDALMA (*starting with an expression of pain*).

What is that sound? — that jarring cruel sound?

'T is there — outside.

She tries to start away towards the window, but DON SILVA detains her.)

DON SILVA.

O heed it not, it comes
From workmen in the outer gallery.

FEDALMA.

It is the sound of fetters; sound of work
Is not so dismal. Hark, they pass along!
I know it is those Gypsy prisoners.
I saw them, heard their chains. O horrible,
To be in chains! Why, I with all my bliss
Have longed sometimes to fly and be at large;
Have felt imprisoned in my luxury
With servants for my gaolers. O my lord,
Do you not wish the world were different?

DON SILVA.

It will be different when this war has ceased.
You, wedding me, will make it different,
Making one life more perfect.

FEDALMA.

That is true!
And I shall beg much kindness at your hands
For those who are less happy than ourselves. —
(Brightening) Oh I shall rule you! ask for many things
Before the world, which you will not deny
For very pride, lest men should say, "The Duke
Holds lightly by his Duchess; he repents
His humble choice."

(She breaks away from him and returns to the jewels, taking up a necklace, and clasping it on her neck, while he takes a circlet of diamonds and rubies and raises it towards her head as he speaks.)

DON SILVA.

Doubtless, I shall persist
In loving you, to disappoint the world ;
Out of pure obstinacy feel myself
Happiest of men. Now, take the coronet.
(He places the circlet on her head.)
The diamonds want more light. See, from this lamp
I can set tapers burning.

FEDALMA.

Tell me, now,
When all these cruel wars are at an end,
And when we go to Court at Córdoba,
Or Seville, or Toledo — wait awhile,
I must be farther off for you to see —
(She retreats to a distance from him, and then advances slowly.)
Now think (I would the tapers gave more light !)
If when you show me at the tournaments
Among the other ladies, they will say,
“ Duke Silva is well matched. His bride was nought,
Was some poor foster-child, no man knows what ;
Yet is her carriage noble, all her robes
Are worn with grace : she might have been well born.”
Will they say so ? Think now we are at Court,
And all eyes bent on me.

DON SILVA.

Fear not, my Duchess !
Some knight who loves may say his lady-love
Is fairer, being fairest. None can say
Don Silva's bride might better fit her rank.
You will make rank seem natural as kind,
As eagle's plumage or the lion's might.
A crown upon your brow would seem God-made.

FEDALMA.

Then I am glad! I shall try on to-night
 The other jewels — have the tapers lit,
 And see the diamonds sparkle.

(She goes to the casket again.)

Here is gold —

A necklace of pure gold — most finely wrought.

*(She takes out a large gold necklace and holds it
 up before her, then turns to DON SILVA.)*

But this is one that you have worn, my lord?

DON SILVA.

No, love, I never wore it. Lay it down.

*(He puts the necklace gently out of her
 hand, then joins both her hands and
 holds them up between his own.)*

You must not look at jewels any more,
 But look at me.

FEDALMA *(looking up at him.)*

O you dear heaven!

I should see nought if you were gone. 'T is true
 My mind is too much given to gauds — to things
 That fether thought within this narrow space.
 That comes of fear.

DON SILVA.

What fear?

FEDALMA.

Fear of myself.

For when I walk upon the battlements
 And see the river travelling toward the plain,
 The mountains screening all the world beyond,
 A longing comes that haunts me in my dreams —
 Dreams where I seem to spring from off the walls,
 And fly far, far away, until at last
 I find myself alone among the rocks,
 Remember then that I have left you — try
 To fly back to you — and my wings are gone!

DON SILVA.

A wicked dream ! If ever I left you,
Even in dreams, it was some demon dragged me,
And with fierce struggles I awaked myself.

FEDALMA.

It is a hateful dream, and when it comes —
I mean, when in my waking hours there comes
That longing to be free, I am afraid :
I run down to my chamber, plait my hair,
Weave colors in it, lay out all my gauds,
And in my mind make new ones prettier.
You see I have two minds, and both are foolish.
Sometimes a torrent rushing through my soul
Escapes in wild strange wishes ; presently,
It dwindles to a little babbling rill
And plays among the pebbles and the flowers.
Ifiez will have it I lack broidery,
Says nought else gives content to noble maids.
But I have never broidered — never will.
No, when I am a Duchess and a wife
I shall ride forth — may I not ? — by your side.

DON SILVA.

Yes, you shall ride upon a palfrey, black
To match Bavieca. Not Queen Isabel
Will be a sight more gladdening to men's eyes
Than my dark queen Fedalma.

FEDALMA.

Ah, but you,
You are my king, and I shall tremble still
With some great fear that throbs within my love.
Does your love fear ?

DON SILVA.

Ah, yes ! all preciousness
To mortal hearts is guarded by a fear.
All love fears loss, and most that loss supreme,

Its own perfection — seeing, feeling change
 From high to lower, dearer to less dear.
 Can love be careless? If we lost our love
 What should we find? — with this sweet Past torn off,
 Our lives deep scarred just where their beauty lay?
 The best we found thenceforth were still a worse:
 The only better is a Past that lives
 On through an added Present, stretching still
 In hope unchecked by shaming memories
 To life's last breath. And so I tremble too
 Before my queen Fedalma.

FEDALMA.

That is just.
 'T were hard of Love to make us women fear
 And leave you bold. Yet Love is not quite even.
 For feeble creatures, little birds and fawns,
 Are shaken more by fear, while large strong things
 Can bear it stoutly. So we women still
 Are not well dealt with. Yet I'd choose to be
 Fedalma loving Silva. You, my lord,
 Hold the worse share, since you must love poor me.
 But is it what we love, or how we love,
 That makes true good?

DON SILVA.

O subtlety! for me
 'T is what I love determines how I love.
 The goddess with pure rites reveals herself
 And makes pure worship.

FEDALMA.

Do you worship me?

DON SILVA.

Ay, with that best of worship which adores
 Goodness adorable.

FEDALMA (*archly*).

Goodness obedient,
 Doing your will, devoutest worshipper?

DON SILVA.

Yes — listening to this prayer. This very night
I shall go forth. And you will rise with day
And wait for me ?

FEDALMA.

Yes.

DON SILVA.

I shall surely come.
And then we shall be married. Now I go
To audience fixed in Abderahman's tower.
Farewell, love !

(*They embrace.*)

FEDALMA.

Some chill dread possesses me !

DON SILVA.

Oh, confidence has oft been evil augury,
So dread may hold a promise. Sweet, farewell !
I shall send tendance as I pass, to bear
This casket to your chamber. — One more kiss.

(*Exit.*)

FEDALMA (*when DON SILVA is gone, returning to the casket, and looking dreamily at the jewels.*)

Yes, now that good seems less impossible !
Now it seems true that I shall be his wife,
Be ever by his side, and make a part
In all his purposes. . . .
These rubies greet me Duchess. How they glow !
Their prisoned souls are throbbing like my own.
Perchance they loved once, were ambitious, proud ;
Or do they only dream of wider life,
Ache from intenseness, yearn to burst the wall
Compact of crystal splendor, and to flood
Some wider space with glory ? Poor, poor gems !
We must be patient in our prison-house,

And find our space in loving. Pray you, love me.
 Let us be glad together. And you, gold —
(She takes up the gold necklace.)
 You wondrous necklace — will you love me too,
 And be my amulet to keep me safe
 From eyes that hurt ?
*(She spreads out the necklace, meaning to clasp it on
 her neck. Then pauses, startled, holding it be-
 fore her.)*

Why, it is magical !
 He says he never wore it — yet these lines —
 Nay, if he had, I should remember well
 'T was he, no other. And these twisted lines —
 They seem to speak to me as writing would,
 To bring a message from the dead, dead past
 What is their secret ? Are they characters ?
 I never learned them ; yet they stir some sense
 That once I dreamed — I have forgotten what.
 Or was it life ? Perhaps I lived before
 In some strange world where first my soul was shaped,
 And all this passionate love, and joy, and pain,
 That come, I know not whence, and sway my deeds,
 Are old imperious memories, blind yet strong,
 That this world stirs within me ; as this chain
 Stirs some strange certainty of visions gone,
 And all my mind is as an eye that stares
 Into the darkness painfully.
*(While FEDALMA has been looking at the necklace,
 JUAN has entered, and finding himself unobserved
 by her, says at last,)*

Señora !

FEDALMA starts, and gathering the necklace together, turns
 round —

Oh, Juan, it is you !

JUAN.

I met the Duke —
 Had waited long without, no matter why --
 And when he ordered one to wait on you
 And carry forth a burthen you would give,
 I prayed for leave to be the servitor.
 Don Silva owes me twenty granted wishes

That I have never tendered, lacking aught
That I could wish for and a Duke could grant;
But this one wish to serve you, weighs as much
As twenty other longings.

FEDALMA (*smiling*).

That sounds well.
You turn your speeches prettily as songs.
But I will not forget the many days
You have neglected me. Your pupil learns
But little from you now. Her studies flag.
The Duke says, "That is idle Juan's way :
Poets must rove — are honey-sucking birds
And know not constancy." Said he quite true ?

JUAN.

O lady, constancy has kind and rank.
One man's is lordly, plump, and bravely clad,
Holds its head high, and tells the world its name :
Another man's is beggared, must go bare,
And shiver through the world, the jest of all,
But that it puts the motley on, and plays
Itself the jester. But I see you hold
The Gypsy's necklace : it is quaintly wrought.

FEDALMA.

The Gypsy's ? Do you know its history ?

JUAN.

No farther back than when I saw it taken
From off its wearer's neck — the Gypsy chief's.

FEDALMA (*eagerly*).

What ! he who paused, at tolling of the bell,
Before me in the Plaça ?

JUAN.

Yes, I saw

His look fixed on you.

FEDALMA.

Know you aught of him ?

JUAN.

Something and nothing — as I know the sky,
 Or some great story of the olden time
 That hides a secret. I have oft talked with him.
 He seems to say much, yet is but a wizard
 Who draws down rain by sprinkling; throws me out
 Some pregnant text that urges comment; casts
 A sharp-hooked question, baited with such skill
 It needs must catch the answer.

FEDALMA.

It is hard
 That such a man should be a prisoner —
 Be chained to work.

JUAN.

Oh, he is dangerous !
 Granáda with this Zarca for a king
 Might still main Christendom. He is of those
 Who steal the keys from snoring Destiny
 And make the prophets lie. A Gypsy, too,
 Suckled by hunted beasts, whose mother-milk
 Has filled his veins with hate.

FEDALMA.

I thought his eyes
 Spoke not of hatred — seemed to say he bore
 The pain of those who never could be saved.
 What if the Gypsies are but savage beasts
 And must be hunted ? — let them be set free,
 Have benefit of chase, or stand at bay
 And fight for life and offspring. Prisoners !
 Oh ! they have made their fires beside the streams,
 Their walls have been the rocks, the pillared pines,
 Their roof the living sky that breathes with light :
 They may well hate a cage, like strong-winged birds,

Like me, who have no wings, but only wishes.
I will beseech the Duke to set them free.

JUAN.

Pardon me, lady, if I seem to warn,
Or try to play the sage. What if the Duke
Loved not to hear of Gypsies? if their name
Were poisoned for him once, being used amiss?
I speak not as of fact. Our nimble souls
Can spin an insubstantial universe
Suiting our mood, and call it possible,
Sooner than see one grain with eye exact
And give strict record of it. Yet by chance
Our fancies may be truth and make us seers.
'T is a rare teeming world, so harvest-full,
Even guessing ignorance may pluck some fruit.
Note what I say no farther than will stead
The siege you lay. I would not seem to tell
Aught that the Duke may think and yet withhold:
It were a trespass in me.

FEDALMA.

Fear not, Juan.
Your words bring daylight with them when you speak.
I understand your care. But I am brave —
Oh! and so cunning! — always I prevail.
Now, honored Troubadour, if you will be
Your pupil's servant, bear this casket hence.
Nay, not the necklace: it is hard to place.
Pray go before me; Iñez will be there.
(*Exit JUAN with the casket.*)

FEDALMA (*looking again at the necklace*).

It is *his* past clings to you, not my own.
If we have each our angels, good and bad,
Fates, separate from ourselves, who act for us
When we are blind, or sleep, then this man's fate,
Hovering about the thing he used to wear,
Has laid its grasp on mine appealingly.
Dangerous, is he? — well, a Spanish knight

Would have his enemy strong — defy, not bind him.
 I can dare all things when my soul is moved
 By something hidden that possesses me.
 If Silva said this man must keep his chains
 I should find ways to free him — disobey
 And free him as I did the birds. But no!
 As soon as we are wed, I'll put my prayer,
 And he will not deny me : he is good.
 Oh, I shall have much power as well as joy !
 Duchess Fedaluna may do what she will.

A Street by the Castle. JUAN leans against a parapet, in moonlight, and touches his lute half unconsciously. PEPITA stands on tiptoe watching him, and then advances till her shadow falls in front of him. He looks towards her. A piece of white drapery thrown over her head catches the moonlight.

JUAN.

Ha ! my Pepita ! see how thin and long
 Your shadow is. 'T is so your ghost will be,
 When you are dead.

PEPITA (*crossing herself*).

Dead ! — O the blessed saints !
 You would be glad, then, if Pepita died ?

JUAN.

Glad ! why ? Dead maidens are not merry. Ghosts
 Are doleful company. I like you living.

PEPITA.

I think you like me not. I wish you did.
 Sometimes you sing to me and make me dance,
 Another time you take no heed of me,
 Not though I kiss my hand to you and smile.
 But Andrès would be glad if I kissed *him*.

JUAN.

My poor Pepita, I am old.

PEPITA.

No, no.

You have no wrinkles.

JUAN.

Yes, I have — within ;
The wrinkles are within, my little bird.
Why, I have lived through twice a thousand years,
And kept the company of men whose bones
Crumbled before the blessed Virgin lived.

PEPITA (*crossing herself*).

Nay, God defend us, that is wicked talk !
You say it but to scorn me. (*With a sob*) I will go.

JUAN.

Stay, little pigeon. I am not unkind.
Come, sit upon the wall. Nay, never cry.
Give me your cheek to kiss. There, cry no more !
(*PEPITA, sitting on the low parapet, puts up her cheek
to JUAN, who kisses it, putting his hand under her
chin. She takes his hand and kisses it.*)

PEPITA.

I like to kiss your hand. It is so good —
So smooth and soft.

JUAN.

Well, well, I'll sing to you.

PEPITA.

A pretty song, loving and merry ?

JUAN.

Yes.

We old, old poets, if we kept our hearts,
Should hardly know them from another man's.
They shrink to make room for the many more
We keep within us. There, now — one more kiss,
And then go home again.

PEPITA (*a little frightened, after letting JUAN kiss her*).

You are not wicked ?

JUAN.

Ask your confessor — tell him what I said.
(PEPITA goes, while JUAN thrums his lute again, and sings.)

*Came a pretty maid
By the moon's pure light,
Loved me well, she said,
Eyes with tears all bright,
A pretty maid !*

*But too late she strayed,
Moonlight pure was there ;
She was nought but shade
Hiding the more fair,
The heavenly maid !*

A vaulted room all stone. The light shed from a high lamp. Wooden chairs, a desk, book-shelves. The PRIOR, in white frock, a black rosary with a crucifix of ebony and ivory at his side, is walking up and down, holding a written paper in his hands, which are clasped behind him.

What if this witness lies ? he says he heard her
Counting her blasphemies on a rosary,
And in a bold discourse with Salomo,
Say that the Host was nought but ill-mixed flour,
That it was mean to pray — she never prayed.
I know the man who wrote this for a cur,
Who follows Don Diego, sees life's good
In scraps my nephew flings to him. What then ?
Particular lies may speak a general truth.

I guess him false, but know her heretic —
 Know her for Satan's instrument, bedecked
 With heathenish charms, luring the souls of men
 To damning trust in good unsanctified.
 Let her be prisoned — questioned — she will give
 Witness against herself, that were this false . . .

(He looks at the paper again and reads, then again thrusts it behind him.)

The matter and the color are not false :
 The form concerns the witness not the judge ;
 For proof is gathered by the shifting mind,
 Not given in crude and formal circumstance.
 Suspicion is a heaven-sent lamp, and I —
 I, watchman of the Holy Office, bear
 That lamp in trust. I will keep faithful watch.
 The Holy Inquisition's discipline
 Is mercy, saving her, if penitent —
 God grant it ! — else — root up the poison-plant,
 Though 't were a lily with a golden heart !
 This spotless maiden with her pagan soul
 Is the arch-enemy's trap : he turns his back
 On all the prostitutes, and watches her
 To see her poison men with false belief
 In rebel virtues. She has poisoned Silva ;
 His shifting mind, dangerous in fitfulness,
 Strong in the contradiction of itself,
 Carries his young ambitions wearily,
 As holy vows regretted. Once he seemed
 The fresh-oped flower of Christian knighthood, born
 For feats of holy daring ; and I said :
 " That half of life which I, as monk, renounce,
 Shall be fulfilled in him : Silva will be
 That saintly noble, that wise warrior,
 That blameless excellence in worldly gifts
 I would have been, had I not asked to live
 The higher life of man impersonal
 Who reigns o'er all things by refusing all."
 What is his promise now ? Apostasy
 From every high intent : — languid, nay, gone,
 The prompt devoutness of a generous heart,
 The strong obedience of a reverent will,
 That breathes the Church's air and sees her light,
 He peers and strains with feeble questioning,
 Or else he jests. He thinks I know it not —

(JUAN sings.)

Memory
Tell to me
What is fair,
Past compare,
In the land of Tubal?

Is it Spring's
Lovely things,
Blossoms white,
Rosy dight?
Then it is Pepita.

Summer's crest
Red-gold tressed,
Corn-flowers peeping under? —
Idle noons,
Lingering moons,
Sudden cloud,
Lightning's shroud,
Sudden rain,
Quick again
Smiles where late was thunder? —
Are all these
Made to please?
So too is Pepita.

Autumn's prime,
Apple-time,
Smooth cheek round,
Heart all sound? —
Is it this
You would kiss?
Then it is Pepita.

You can bring
No sweet thing,
But my mind
Still shall find
It is my Pepita.

*Memory
Says to me
It is she—
She is fair
Past compare
In the land of Tubal.*

PEPITA (*seizing JUAN's hand again*).

Oh, then, you do love me ?

JUAN.

Yes, in the song.

PEPITA (*sadly*).

Not out of it ? — not love me out of it ?

JUAN.

Only a little out of it, my bird.
When I was singing I was Andrès, say,
Or one who loves you better still than he.

PEPITA.

Not yourself ?

JUAN.

No !

PEPITA (*throwing his hand down pettishly*).

Then take it back again !

I will not have it !

JUAN.

Listen, little one.

Juan is not a living man by himself :
His life is breathed in him by other men,
And they speak out of him. He is their voice.
Juan's own life he gave once quite away.
Pepita's lover sang that song — not Juan.

We old, old poets, if we kept our hearts,
Should hardly know them from another man's.
They shrink to make room for the many more
We keep within us. There, now — one more kiss,
And then go home again.

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 The strong obedience of a reverent will,
 That breathes the Church's air and sees her light,
 He peers and strains with feeble questioning,
 Or else he jests. He thinks I know it not —

I who have read the history of his lapse,
 As clear as it is writ in the angel's book.
 He will defy me — flings great words at me —
 Me who have governed all our house's acts,
 Since I, a stripling, ruled his stripling father.
 This maiden is the cause, and if they wed,
 The Holy War may count a captain lost.
 For better he were dead than keep his place,
 And fill it infamously: in God's war
 Slackness is infamy. Shall I stand by
 And let the tempter win? defraud Christ's cause,
 And blot his banner? — all for scruples weak
 Of pity towards their young and frolicsome blood;
 Or nice discrimination of the tool
 By which my hand shall work a sacred rescue?
 The fence of rules is for the purblind crowd;
 They walk by averaged precepts: sovereign men,
 Seeing by God's light, see the general
 By seeing all the special — own no rule
 But their full vision of the moment's worth.
 'T is so God governs, using wicked men —
 Nay, scheming fiends, to work his purposes.
 Evil that good may come? Measure the good
 Before you say what's evil. Perjury?
 I scorn the perjurer, but I will use him
 To serve the holy truth. There is no lie
 Save in his soul, and let his soul be judged.
 I know the truth, and act upon the truth.

O God, thou knowest that my will is pure.
 Thy servant owns nought for himself, his wealth
 Is but obedience. And I have sinned
 In keeping small respects of human love —
 Calling it mercy. Mercy? Where evil is
 True mercy holds a sword. Mercy would save.
 Save whom? Save serpents, locusts, wolves?
 Or out of pity let the idiots gorge
 Within a famished town? Or save the gains
 Of men who trade in poison lest they starve?
 Save all things mean and foul that clog the earth
 Stifling the better? Save the fools who cling
 For refuge round their hideous idol's limbs,
 So leave the idol grinning unconsumed,
 And save the fools to breed idolaters?

O mercy worthy of the licking hound
 That knows no future but its feeding time!
 Mercy has eyes that pierce the ages — sees
 From heights divine of the eternal purpose
 Far-scattered consequence in its vast sum;
 Chooses to save, but with illumined vision
 Sees that to save is greatly to destroy.
 'T is so the Holy Inquisition sees: its wrath
 Is fed from the strong heart of wisest love.
 For love must needs make hatred. He who loves
 God and his law must hate the foes of God.
 And I have sinned in being merciful:
 Being slack in hate, I have been slack in love.

(He takes the crucifix and holds it up before him.)

Thou shuddering, bleeding, thirsting, dying God,
 Thou Man of Sorrows, scourged and bruised and torn,
 Suffering to save — wilt thou not judge the world?
 This arm which held the children, this pale hand
 That gently touched the eyelids of the blind,
 And opened passive to the cruel nail,
 Shall one day stretch to leftward of thy throne,
 Charged with the power that makes the lightning strong,
 And hurl thy foes to everlasting hell.
 And thou, Immaculate Mother, Virgin mild,
 Thou sevenfold-pierced, thou pitying, pleading Queen,
 Shalt see and smile, while the black filthy souls
 Sink with foul weight to their eternal place,
 Purging the Holy Light. Yea, I have sinned
 And called it mercy. But I shrink no more.
 To-morrow morn this temptress shall be safe
 Under the Holy Inquisition's key.
 He thinks to wed her, and defy me then,
 She being shielded by our house's name.
 But he shall never wed her. I have said.

The time is come. *Exurge, Domine,*
Judica causam tuam. Let thy foes
 Be driven as the smoke before the wind,
 And melt like wax upon the furnace lip!

A large chamber richly furnished opening on a terrace-garden, the trees visible through the window in faint moonlight. Flowers hanging about the window, lit up by the tapers. The casket of jewels open on the table.

The gold necklace lying near. FEDALMA, splendidly dressed and adorned with pearls and rubies, is walking up and down.

So soft a night was never made for sleep,
But for the waking of the finer sense
To every murmuring and gentle sound,
To subtlest odors, pulses, visitings
That touch our frames with wings too delicate
To be discerned amid the blare of day.

*(She pauses near the window to gather some
jasmine: then walks again.)*

Surely these flowers keep happy watch — their breath
Is their fond memory of the loving light.
I often rue the hours I lose in sleep:

It is a bliss too brief, only to see
This glorious world, to hear the voice of love,
To feel the touch, the breath of tenderness,
And then to rest as from a spectacle.
I need the curtained stillness of the night
To live through all my happy hours again
With more selection — cull them quite away
From blemished moments. Then in loneliness
The face that bent before me in the day
Rises in its own light, more vivid seems
Painted upon the dark, and ceaseless glows
With sweet solemnity of gazing love,
Till like the heavenly blue it seems to grow
Nearer, more kindred, and more cherishing,
Mingling with all my being. Then the words,
The tender low-toned words come back again,
With repetition welcome as the chime
Of softly hurrying brooks — "My only love —
My love while life shall last — my own Fedalma!"
Oh it is mine — the joy that once has been!
Poor eager hope is but a stammerer,
Must listen dumbly to great memory,
Who makes our bliss the sweeter by her telling.

(She pauses a moment musingly.)

But that dumb hope is still a sleeping guard
Whose quiet rhythmic breath saves me from dread
In this fair paradise. For if the earth
Broke off with flower-fringed edge, visibly sheer,
Leaving no footing for my forward step



"My Father . . . comes . . . my Father."

But empty blackness . . .

Nay, there is no fear —
They will renew themselves; day and my joy,
And all that past which is securely mine,
Will be the hidden root that nourishes
Our still unfolding, ever-ripening love!

*(While she is uttering the last words, a little bird
falls softly on the floor behind her; she hears
the light sound of its fall, and turns round.)*

Did something enter ? . . .

Yes, this little bird . . .
(She lifts it.)

Dead and yet warm; 't was seeking sanctuary,
And died, perhaps of fright, at the altar foot.
Stay, there is something tied beneath the wing!
A strip of linen, streaked with blood — what blood?
The streaks are written words — are sent to me —
O God, are sent to me! *Dear child, Fedalma,*
Be brave, give no alarm — your Father comes!

(She lets the bird fall again.)

My Father . . . comes . . . my Father . . .
*(She turns in quivering expectation toward the win-
dow. There is perfect stillness a few moments
until ZARCA appears at the window. He enters
quickly and noiselessly; then stands still at his
full height, and at a distance from FEDALMA.)*
FEDALMA *(in a low distinct tone of terror).*

It is he!

I said his fate had laid its hold on mine.

ZARCA *(advancing a step or two).*

You know, then, who I am ?

FEDALMA.

The prisoner —
He whom I saw in fetters — and this necklace. . . .

ZARCA.

Was played with by your fingers when it hung
About my neck, full fifteen years ago.

FEDALMA (*looking at the necklace and handling it, then speaking, as if unconsciously*).

Full fifteen years ago !

ZARCA.

The very day
I lost you, when you wore a tiny gown
Of scarlet cloth with golden broidery :
'T was clasped in front by coins — two golden coins.
The one upon the left was split in two
Across the king's head right from brow to nape,
A dent i' the middle nicking in the cheek.
You see I know the little gown by heart.

FEDALMA (*growing paler and more tremulous*).

Yes. It is true — I have the gown — the clasps —
The braid — sore tarnished : — it is long ago !

ZARCA.

But yesterday to me ; for till to-day
I saw you always as that little child.
And when they took my necklace from me, still
Your fingers played about it on my neck,
And still those buds of fingers on your feet
Caught in its meshes as you seemed to climb
Up to my shoulder. You were not stolen all.
You had a double life fed from my heart. . . .
(FEDALMA. *letting fall the necklace, makes an
impulsive movement towards him, with out-
stretched hands.*)

The Gypsy father loves his children well.

FEDALMA (*shrinking, trembling, and letting fall
her hands.*)

How came it that you sought me — no — I mean
How came it that you knew me — that you lost me ?

ZARCA (*standing perfectly still*).

Poor child ! I see — your father and his rags
Are welcome as the piercing wintry wind
Within this silken chamber. It is well.
I would not have a child who stooped to feign,
And aped a sudden love. Better, true hate.

FEDALMA (*raising her eyes towards him, with a flash
of admiration, and looking at him fixedly*).

Father, how was it that we lost each other ?

ZARCA.

I lost you as a man may lose a gem
Wherein he has compressed his total wealth,
Or the right hand whose cunning makes him great :
I lost you by a trivial accident.
Marauding Spaniards, sweeping like a storm
Over a spot within the Moorish bounds,
Near where our camp lay, doubtless snatched you up,
When Zind, your nurse, as she confessed, was urged
By burning thirst to wander toward the stream,
And leave you on the sand some paces off
Playing with pebbles, while she dog-like lapped.
'T was so I lost you — never saw you more
Until to-day I saw you dancing ! Saw
The daughter of the Zincalo make sport
For those who spit upon her people's name.

FEDALMA (*vehemently*).

It was not sport. What if the world looked on ? —
I danced for joy — for love of all the world.
But when you looked at me my joy was stabbed —
Stabbed with your pain. I wondered . . . now I know . . .
It was my father's pain.

(*She pauses a moment with eyes bent downward,
during which ZARCA examines her face. Then
she says quickly,*)

How were you sure

At once I was your child ?

ZARCA.

I had witness strong
 As any Cadi needs, before I saw you !
 I fitted all my memories with the chat
 Of one named Juan — one whose rapid talk
 Showers like the blossoms from a light-twigg'd shrub,
 If you but cough beside it. I learned all
 The story of your Spanish nurture — all
 The promise of your fortune. When at last
 I fronted you, my little maid full-grown,
 Belief was turned to vision : then I saw
 That she whom Spaniards called the bright Fedalma —
 The little red-frocked foundling three years old —
 Grown to such perfectness the Spanish Duke
 Had wooed her for his Duchess — was the child,
 Sole offspring of my flesh, that Lambra bore
 One hour before the Christian, hunting us,
 Hurried her on to death. Therefore I sought —
 Therefore I come to claim you — claim my child,
 Not from the Spaniard, not from him who robbed,
 But from herself.

*(FEDALMA has gradually approached close to
 ZARCA, and with a low sob sinks on her knees
 before him. He stoops to kiss her brow, and
 lays his hands on her head.)*

ZARCA (*with solemn tenderness*).

Then my child owns her father ?

FEDALMA.

Father ! yes.

I will eat dust before I will deny
 The flesh I spring from.

ZARCA.

There my daughter spoke.

Away then with these rubies !

*(He seizes the circlet of rubies and flings it on the
 ground. FEDALMA, starting from the ground
 with strong emotion, shrinks backward.)*

Such a crown
Is infamy around Zíncala's brow.
It is her people's blood, decking her shame.

FEDALMA (*after a moment, slowly and distinctly, as if accepting a doom*).

Then . . . I was born . . . a Zíncala ?

ZARCA.

Of a blood
Unmixed as virgin wine-juice.

FEDALMA.

Of a race
More outcast and despised than Moor or Jew ?

ZARCA

Yes: wanderers whom no God took knowledge of
To give them laws, to fight for them, or blight
Another race to make them ampler room ;
Who have no Whence or Whither in their souls,
No dimmest lore of glorious ancestors
To make a common hearth for piety.

FEDALMA.

A race that lives on prey as foxes do
With stealthy, petty rapine : so despised,
It is not persecuted, only spurned,
Crushed underfoot, warred on by chance like rats,
Or swarming flies, or reptiles of the sea
Dragged in the net unsought, and flung far off,
To perish as they may ?

ZARCA.

You paint us well.
So abject are the men whose blood we share :
Untutored, unbefriended, unendowed ;
No favorites of heaven or of men.
Therefore I cling to them ! Therefore no lure

Shall draw me to disown them, or forsake
 The meagre wandering herd that lows for help
 And needs me for its guide, to seek my pasture
 Among the well-fed beeves that graze at will.
 Because our race has no great memories,
 I will so live, it shall remember me
 For deeds of such divine beneficence
 As rivers have, that teach men what is good
 By blessing them. I have been schooled — have caught
 Lore from the Hebrew, deftness from the Moor —
 Know the rich heritage, the milder life,
 Of nations fathered by a mighty Past;
 But were our race accursed (as they who make
 Good luck a god count all unlucky men)
 I would espouse their curse sooner than take
 My gifts from brethren naked of all good,
 And lend them to the rich for usury.

*(FEDALMA again advances, and putting forth her
 right hand grasps ZARCA's left. He places his
 other hand on her shoulder. They stand so, look-
 ing at each other.)*

ZARCA.

And you, my child? are you of other mind,
 Choosing forgetfulness, hating the truth
 That says you are akin to needy men? —
 Wishing your father were some Christian Duke,
 Who could hang Gypsies when their task was done,
 While you, his daughter, were not bound to care?

FEDALMA (*in a troubled eager voice*).

No, I should always care — I cared for you —
 For all, before I dreamed

ZARCA.

Before you dreamed
 That you were born a Zíncala — your flesh
 Stamped with your people's faith.

FEDALMA (*bitterly*).

Men say they have none. The Gypsies' faith?

ZARCA.

Oh, it is a faith
 Taught by no priest, but by their beating hearts :
 Faith to each other : the fidelity
 Of fellow-wanderers in a desert place
 Who share the same dire thirst, and therefore share
 The scanty water : the fidelity
 Of men whose pulses leap with kindred fire,
 Who in the flash of eyes, the clasp of hands,
 The speech that even in lying tells the truth
 Of heritage inevitable as birth,
 Nay, in the silent bodily presence feel
 The mystic stirring of a common life
 Which makes the many one : fidelity
 To the consecrating oath our sponsor Fate
 Made through our infant breath when we were born
 The fellow-heirs of that small island, Life,
 Where we must dig and sow and reap with brothers.
 Fear thou that oath, my daughter — nay, not fear,
 But love it ; for the sanctity of oaths
 Lies not in lightning that avenges them,
 But in the injury wrought by broken bonds
 And in the garnered good of human trust.
 And you have sworn — even with your infant breath
 You too were pledged . . .

FEDALMA (*letting go ZARCA's hand, and sinking backward on her knees with bent head, as if before some impending crushing weight.*)

To what ? what have I sworn ?

ZARCA.

To take the heirship of the Gypsy's child :
 The child of him who, being chief, will be
 The savior of his tribe, or if he fail
 Will choose to fail rather than basely win
 The prize of renegades. Nay, will not choose —
 Is there a choice for strong souls to be weak ?
 For men erect to crawl like hissing snakes ?
 I choose not — I *am* Zarca. Let him choose

Who halts and wavers, having appetite
To feed on garbage. You, my child — are you
Halting and wavering ?

FEDALMA (*raising her head*).

Say what is my task.

ZARCA.

To be the angel of a homeless tribe :
To help me bless a race taught by no prophet
And make their name, now but a badge of scorn,
A glorious banner floating in their midst,
Stirring the air they breathe with impulses
Of generous pride, exalting fellowship
Until it soars to magnanimity.
I'll guide my brethren forth to their new land,
— Where they shall plant and sow and reap their own,
Serving each other's needs, and so be spurred
To skill in all the arts that succor life ;
Where we may kindle our first altar-fire
From settled hearths, and call our Holy Place
The hearth that binds us in one family.
That land awaits them : they await their chief —
Me who am prisoned. All depends on you.

FEDALMA (*rising to her full height, and looking
solemnly at ZARCA*).

Father, your child is ready ! She will not
Forsake her kindred : she will brave all scorn
Sooner than scorn herself. Let Spaniards all,
Christians, Jews, Moors, shoot out the lip and say,
“ Lo, the first hero in a tribe of thieves.”
Is it not written so of them ? They, too,
Were slaves, lost, wandering, sunk beneath a curse,
Till Moses, Christ, and Mahomet were born,
Till beings lonely in their greatness lived,
And lived to save their people. Father, listen.
The Duke to-morrow weds me secretly :
But straight he will present me as his wife
To all his household, cavaliers and dames

And noble pages. Then I will declare
 Before them all, "I am his daughter, his,
 The Gypsy's, owner of this golden badge."
 Then I shall win your freedom; then the Duke —
 Why, he will be your son! — will send you forth
 With aid and honors. Then, before all eyes
 I'll clasp this badge on you, and lift my brow
 For you to kiss it, saying by that sign,
 "I glory in my father." This, to-morrow.

ZARCA.

A woman's dream — who thinks by smiling well
 'To ripen figs in frost. What! marry first,
 And then proclaim your birth? Enslave yourself
 'To use your freedom? Share another's name.
 Then treat it as you will? How will that tune
 Ring in your bridegroom's ears — that sudden song
 Of triumph in your Gypsy father?

FEDALMA (*discouraged*).

Nay,
 I meant not so. We marry hastily —
 Yet there is time — there will be: — in less space
 Than he can take to look at me, I'll speak
 And tell him all. Oh, I am not afraid!
 His love for me is stronger than all hate;
 Nay, stronger than my love, which cannot sway
 Demons that haunt me — tempt me to rebel.
 Were he Fedalma and I Silva, he
 Could love confession, prayers, and tonsured monks
 If my soul craved them. He will never hate
 The race that bore him what he loves the most.
 I shall but do more strongly what I will,
 Having his will to help me. And to-morrow,
 Father, as surely as this heart shall beat,
 You — every Gypsy chained, shall be set free.

ZARCA (*coming nearer to her, and laying his
hand on her shoulder*).

Too late, too poor a service that, my child!
 Not so the woman who would save her tribe

Must help its heroes — not by wordy breath,
 By easy prayers strong in a lover's ear,
 By showering wreaths and sweets and wafted kisses,
 And then, when all the smiling work is done,
 Turning to rest upon her down again,
 And whisper languid pity for her race
 Upon the bosom of her alien spouse.
 Not to such petty mercies as can fall
 'Twixt stitch and stitch of silken broidery,
 Such miracles of mitred saints who pause
 Beneath their gilded canopy to heal
 A man sun-stricken : not to such trim merit
 As soils its dainty shoes for charity
 And simpers meekly at the pious stain,
 But never trod with naked bleeding feet
 Where no man praised it, and where no Church blessed
 Not to such almsdeeds fit for holidays
 Were you, my daughter, consecrated — bound
 By laws that, breaking, you will dip your bread
 In murdered brother's blood and call it sweet —
 When you were born beneath the dark man's tent,
 And lifted up in sight of all your tribe,
 Who greeted you with shouts of loyal joy,
 Sole offspring of the chief in whom they trust
 As in the oft-tried never-failing flint
 They strike their fire from. Other work is yours.

FEDALMA.

What work ? — what is it that you ask of me ?

ZARCA.

A work as pregnant as the act of men
 Who set their ships aflame and spring to land,
 A fatal deed

FEDALMA.

Stay ! never utter it !
 If it can part my lot from his whose love
 Has chosen me. Talk not of oaths, of birth,
 Of men as numerous as the dim white stars —

As cold and distant, too, for my heart's pulse.
 No ills on earth, though you should count them up
 With grains to make a mountain, can outweigh
 For me, his ill who is my supreme love.
 All sorrows else are but imagined flames,
 Making me shudder at an unfelt smart;
 But his imagined sorrow is a fire
 That scorches me.

ZARCA.

I know, I know it well —
 The first young passionate wail of spirits called
 To some great destiny. In vain, my daughter!
 Lay the young eagle in what nest you will.
 The cry and swoop of eagles overhead
 Vibrate prophetic in its kindred frame,
 And make it spread its wings and poise itself
 For the eagle's flight. Hear what you have to do.
 (FEDALMA stands half averted, as if she
 dreaded the effect of his looks and words.)

My comrades even now file off their chains
 In a low turret by the battlements,
 Where we were locked with slight and sleepy guard —
 We who had files hid in our shaggy hair,
 And possible ropes that waited but our will
 In half our garments. Oh, the Moorish blood
 Runs thick and warm to us, though thinned by chrism.
 I found a friend among our gaolers — one
 Who loves the Gypsy as the Moor's ally.
 I know the secrets of this fortress. Listen.
 Hard by yon terrace is a narrow stair,
 Cut in the living rock, and at one point
 In its slow straggling course it branches off
 Towards a low wooden door, that art has bossed
 To such unevenness, it seems one piece
 With the rough-hewn rock. Open that door, it leads
 Through a broad passage burrowed under-ground
 A good half-mile out to the open plain:
 Made for escape, in dire extremity
 From siege or burning, of the house's wealth
 In women or in gold. To find that door
 Needs one who knows the number of the steps
 Just to the turning-point; to open it,
 Needs one who knows the secret of the bolt.

You have that secret: you will ope that door,
And fly with us.

*FEDALMA (receding a little, and gathering herself up
in an attitude of resolve opposite to ZARCA).*

No, I will never fly!
Never forsake that chief half of my soul
Where lies my love. I swear to set you free.
Ask for no more; it is not possible.
Father, my soul is not too base to ring
At touch of your great thoughts; nay, in my blood
There streams the sense unspeakable of kind,
As leopard feels at ease with leopard. But—
Look at these hands! You say when they were little
They played about the gold upon your neck.
I do believe it, for their tiny pulse
Made record of it in the inmost coil
Of growing memory. But see them now!
Oh, they have made fresh record; twined themselves
With other throbbing hands whose pulses feed
Not memories only but a blended life—
Life that will bleed to death if it be severed.
Have pity on me, father! Wait the morning;
Say you will wait the morning. I will win
Your freedom openly: you shall go forth
With aid and honors. Silva will deny
Nought to my asking . . .

ZARCA (with contemptuous decision).

Till you ask him aught
Wherein he is powerless. Soldiers even now
Murmur against him that he risks the town,
And forfeits all the prizes of a foray
To get his bridal pleasure with a bride
Too low for him. They'll murmur more and louder
If captives of our pith and sinew, fit
For all the work the Spaniard hates, are freed—
Now, too, when Spanish hands are scanty. What,
Turn Gypsies loose instead of hanging them!
'T is flat against the edict. Nay, perchance
Murmurs aloud may turn to silent threats
Of some well-sharpened dagger; for your Duke

Has to his heir a pious cousin, who deems
The Cross were better served if he were Duke.
Such good you 'll work your lover by your prayers.

FEDALMA.

Then, I will free you now ! You shall be safe,
Nor he be blamed, save for his love to me.
I will declare what I have done : the deed
May put our marriage off

ZARCA.

Ay, till the time
When you shall be a queen in Africa,
And he be prince enough to sue for you.
You cannot free us and come back to him.

FEDALMA.

And why ?

ZARCA.

I would compel you to go forth.

FEDALMA.

You tell me that ?

ZARCA.

Yes, for I 'd have you choose ;
Though, being of the blood you are — my blood —
You have no right to choose.

FEDALMA.

I only owe
A daughter's debt ; I was not born a slave.

ZARCA.

No, not a slave ; but you were born to reign.
'T is a compulsion of a higher sort,
Whose fetters are the net invisible
That holds all life together. Royal deeds
May make long destinies for multitudes,

And you are called to do them. You belong
 Not to the petty round of circumstance
 That makes a woman's lot, but to your tribe,
 Who trust in me and in my blood with trust
 That men call blind; but it is only blind
 As unyeaned reason is, that grows and stirs
 Within the womb of superstition.

FEDALMA.

No!

I belong to him who loves me — whom I love —
 Who chose me — whom I chose — to whom I pledged
 A woman's truth. And that is nature too,
 Issuing a fresher law than laws of birth.

ZARCA.

Unmake yourself, then, from a Zíncala —
 Unmake yourself from being child of mine!
 Take holy water, cross your dark skin white;
 Round your proud eyes to foolish kitten looks;
 Walk mincingly, and smirk, and twitch your robe:
 Unmake yourself — doff all the eagle plumes
 And be a parrot, chained to a ring that slips
 Upon a Spaniard's thumb, at will of his
 That you should prattle o'er his words again!
 Get a small heart that flutters at the smiles
 Of that plump penitent, that greedy saint
 Who breaks all treaties in the name of God,
 Saves souls by confiscation, sends to heaven
 The altar-fumes of burning heretics,
 And chaffers with the Levite for the gold;
 Holds Gypsies beasts unfit for sacrifice,
 So sweeps them out like worms alive or dead.
 Go, trail your gold and velvet in her court! —
 A conscieus Zíncala, smile at your rare luck,
 While half your brethren

FEDALMA.

I am not so vile!

It is not to such mockeries that I cling,
 Not to the flaring tow of gala-lights;
 It is to him — my love — the face of day.

ZARCA.

What, will you part him from the air he breathes,
Never inhale with him although you kiss him ?
Will you adopt a soul without its thoughts,
Or grasp a life apart from flesh and blood ?
Till then you cannot wed a Spanish Duke
And not wed shame at mention of your race,
And not wed hardness to their miseries —
Nay, not wed murder. Would you save my life
Yet stab my purpose ? maim my every limb,
Put out my eyes, and turn me loose to feed ?
Is that salvation ? rather drink my blood.
That child of mine who weds my enemy —
Adores a God who took no heed of Gypsies —
Forsakes her people, leaves their poverty
To join the luckier crowd that mocks their woes —
That child of mine is doubly murderess,
Murdering her father's hope, her people's trust.
Such draughts are mingled in your cup of love !
And when you have become a thing so poor,
Your life is all a fashion without law
Save frail conjecture of a changing wish,
Your worshipped sun, your smiling face of day,
Will turn to cloudiness, and you will shiver
In your thin finery of vain desire.
Men call his passion madness ; and he, too,
May learn to think it madness : 't is a thought
Of ducal sanity.

FEDALMA.

No, he is true !
And if I part from him I part from joy.
Oh, it was morning with us — I seemed young.
But now I know I am an aged sorrow —
My people's sorrow. Father, since I am yours —
Since I must walk an unslain sacrifice,
Carrying the knife within me, quivering —
Put cords upon me, drag me to the doom
My birth has laid upon me. See, I kneel :
I cannot will to go.

ZARCA.

Will then to stay !

Say you will take your better, painted such
 By blind desire, and choose the hideous worse
 For thousands who were happier but for you.
 My thirty followers are assembled now
 Without this terrace : I your father wait
 That you may lead us forth to liberty —
 Restore me to my tribe — five hundred men
 Whom I alone can save, alone can rule,
 And plant them as a mighty nation's seed.
 Why, vagabonds who clustered round one man,
 Their voice of God, their prophet and their king,
 Twice grew to empire on the teeming shores
 Of Africa, and sent new royalties
 To feed afresh the Arab sway in Spain.
 My vagabonds are a seed more generous,
 Quick as the serpent, loving as the hound,
 And beautiful as disinherited gods.
 They have a promised land beyond the sea :
 There I may lead them, raise my standard, call
 The wandering Zíncali to that new home,
 And make a nation — bring light, order, law,
 Instead of chaos. You, my only heir,
 Are called to reign for me when I am gone.
 Now choose your deed : to save or to destroy.
 You, a born Zíncala, you, fortunate
 Above your fellows — you who hold a curse
 Or blessing in the hollow of your hand —
 Say you will loose that hand from fellowship,
 Let go the rescuing rope, hurl all the tribes,
 Children and countless beings yet to come,
 Down from the upward path of light and joy,
 Back to the dark and marshy wilderness
 Where life is nought but blind tenacity
 Of that which is. Say you will curse your race !

FEDALMA (*rising and stretching out her arms in
 deprecation*).

No, no — I will not say it — I will go !
 Father, I choose ! I will not take a heaven
 Haunted by shrieks of far-off misery.

This deed and I have ripened with the hours :
 It is a part of me — a wakened thought
 That, rising like a giant, masters me,
 And grows into a doom. O mother life,
 That seemed to nourish me so tenderly,
 Even in the womb you vowed me to the fire,
 Hung on my soul the burden of men's hopes,
 And pledged me to redeem ! — I'll pay the debt.
 You gave me strength that I should pour it all
 Into this anguish. I can never shrink
 Back into bliss — my heart has grown too big
 With things that might be. Father, I will go.
 I will strip off these gems. Some happier bride
 Shall wear them, since Fedalma would be dowered
 With nought but curses, dowered with misery
 Of men — of women, who have hearts to bleed
 As hers is bleeding.

(She sinks on a seat, and begins to take off her jewels.)

Now, good gems, we part.

Speak of me always tenderly to Silva.

(She pauses, turning to ZARCA.)

O father, will the women of our tribe
 Suffer as I do, in the years to come
 When you have made them great in Africa ?
 Redeemed from ignorant ills only to feel
 A conscious woe ? Then — is it worth the pains ?
 Were it not better when we reach that shore
 To raise a funeral-pile and perish all,
 So closing up a myriad avenues
 To misery yet unwrought ? My soul is faint —
 Will these sharp pangs buy any certain good ?

ZARCA.

Nay, never falter : no great deed is done
 By falterers who ask for certainty.
 No good is certain, but the steadfast mind,
 The undivided will to seek the good :
 'T is that compels the elements, and wrings
 A human music from the indifferent air.
 The greatest gift the hero leaves his race
 Is to have been a hero. Say we fail ! —
 We feed the high tradition of the world,
 And leave our spirit in our children's breasts.

FEDALMA (*unclasping her jewelled belt, and
throwing it down*).

Yes, say that we shall fail! I will not count
On aught but being faithful. I will take
This yearning self of mine and strangle it.
I will not be half-hearted: never yet
Fedalma did aught with a wavering soul.
Die, my young joy — die, all my hungry hopes —
The milk you cry for from the breast of life
Is thick with curses. Oh, all fatness here
Snatches its meat from leanness — feeds on graves.
I will seek nothing but to shun base joy.
The saints were cowards who stood by to see
Christ crucified: they should have flung themselves
Upon the Roman spears, and died in vain —
The grandest death, to die in vain — for love
Greater than sways the forces of the world!
That death shall be my bridegroom. I will wed
The curse that blights my people. Father, come!

ZARCA.

No curse has fallen on us till we cease
To help each other. You, if you are false
To that first fellowship, lay on the curse.
But write now to the Spaniard: briefly say
That I, your father, came; that you obeyed
The fate which made you Zíncala, as his fate
Made him a Spanish duke and Christian knight.
He must not think

FEDALMA.

Yes, I will write, but he —
Oh, he would know it — he would never think
The chain that dragged me from him could be aught
But scorching iron entering in my soul.

(*She writes.*)

*Silva, sole love — he came — my father came.
I am the daughter of the Gypsy chief
Who means to be the Saviour of our tribe.
He calls on me to live for his great end.*

*To live? nay, die for it. Fedalma dies
In leaving Silva: all that lives henceforth
Is the poor Zíncala.*

(She rises.)

Father, now I go
To wed my people's lot.

ZARCA.

To wed a crown.
Our people's lowly lot we will make royal —
Give it a country, homes, and monuments
Held sacred through the lofty memories
That we shall leave behind us. Come, my Queen!

FEDALMA.

Stay, my betrothal ring! — one kiss — farewell!
O love, you were my crown. No other crown
Is aught but thorns on my poor woman's brow

BOOK II.

SILVA was marching homeward while the moon
Still shed mild brightness like the far-off hope
Of those pale virgin lives that wait and pray.
The stars thin-scattered made the heavens large,
Bending in slow procession ; in the east
Emergent from the dark waves of the hills,
Seeming a little sister of the moon,
Glowed Venus all unquenched. Silva, in haste,
Exultant and yet anxious, urged his troop
To quick and quicker march : he had delight
In forward stretching shadows, in the gleams
That travelled on the armor of the van,
And in the many-hoofed sound : in all that told
Of hurrying movement to o'ertake his thought
Already in Bedmár, close to Fedalma,
Leading her forth a wedded bride, fast vowed,
Defying Father Isidor. His glance
Took in with much content the priest who rode
Firm in his saddle, stalwart and broad-backed,
Crisp-curved, and comfortably secular,
Right in the front of him. But by degrees
Stealthily faint, disturbing with slow loss
That showed not yet full promise of a gain,
The light was changing, and the watch intense
Of moon and stars seemed weary, shivering :
The sharp white brightness passed from off the rocks
Carrying the shadows : beauteous Night lay dead
Under the pall of twilight, and the love-star
Sickened and shrank. The troop was winding now
Upward to where a pass between the peaks
Seemed like an opened gate — to Silva seemed
An outer-gate of heaven, for through that pass
They entered his own valley, near Bedmár.
Sudden within the pass a horseman rose,

One instant dark upon the banner pale
 Of rock-cut sky, the next in motion swift
 With hat and plume high shaken — ominous.
 Silva had dreamed his future, and the dream
 Held not this messenger. A minute more —
 It was his friend Don Alvar whom he saw
 Reining his horse up, face to face with him,
 Sad as the twilight, all his clothes ill-girt —
 As if he had been roused to see one die,
 And brought the news to him whom death had robbed.
 Silva believed he saw the worst — the town
 Stormed by the infidel — or, could it be
 Fedalma dragged? — no, there was not yet time.
 But with a marble face, he only said,
 "What evil, Alvar?"

"What this paper speaks."

It was Fedalma's letter folded close
 And mute as yet for Silva. But his friend
 Keeping it still sharp-pinned against his breast,
 "It will smite hard, my lord: a private grief.
 I would not have you pause to read it here.
 Let us ride on — we use the moments best,
 Reaching the town with speed. The smaller ill
 Is that our Gypsy prisoners have escaped."
 "No more. Give me the paper — nay, I know —
 'T will make no difference. Bid them march on faster."
 Silva pushed forward — held the paper crushed
 Close in his right. "They have imprisoned her,"
 He said to Alvar in low, hard-cut tones,
 Like a dream-speech of slumbering revenge.
 "No — when they came to fetch her she was gone."
 Swift as the right touch on a spring, that word
 Made Silva read the letter. She was gone!
 But not into locked darkness — only gone
 Into free air — where he might find her yet.
 The bitter loss had triumph in it — what!
 They would have seized her with their holy claws.
 The Prior's sweet morsel of despotic hate
 Was snatched from off his lips. This misery
 Had yet a taste of joy.

But she was gone!

The sun had risen, and in the castle walls
 The light grew strong and stronger. Silva walked
 Through the long corridor where dimness yet

Cherished a lingering, flickering, dying hope :
Fedalma still was there — he could not see
The vacant place that once her presence filled.
Can we believe that the dear dead are gone ?
Love in sad weeds forgets the funeral day,
Opens the chamber door and almost smiles —
Then sees the sunbeams pierce athwart the bed
Where the pale face is not. So Silva's joy,
Like the sweet habit of caressing hands
That seek the memory of another hand,
Still lived on fitfully in spite of words,
And, numbing thought with vague illusion, dulled
The slow and steadfast beat of certainty.
But in the rooms inexorable light
Streamed through the open window where she fled,
Streamed on the belt and coronet thrown down —
Mute witnesses — sought out the typic ring
That sparkled on the crimson, solitary,
Wounding him like a word. O hateful light !
It filled the chambers with her absence, glared
On all the motionless things her hand had touched,
Motionless all — save where old Iñez lay
Sunk on the floor holding her rosary,
Making its shadow tremble with her fear.
And Silva passed her by because she grieved :
It was the lute, the gems, the pictured heads,
He longed to crush, because they made no sign
But of insistence that she was not there,
She who had filled his sight and hidden them.
He went forth on the terrace tow'rd the stairs,
Saw the rained petals of the cistus flowers
Crushed by large feet ; but on one shady spot
Far down the steps, where dampness made a home,
He saw a foot-print delicate-slippered, small.
So dear to him, he searched for sister-prints,
Searched in the rock-hewn passage with a lamp
For other trace of her, and found a glove ;
But not Fedalma's. It was Juan's glove,
Tasselled, perfumed, embroidered with his name,
A gift of dames. Then Juan, too, was gone ?
Full-mouthed conjecture, hurrying through the town,
Had spread the tale already : it was he
That helped the Gypsies' flight. He talked and sang
Of nothing but the Gypsies and Fedalma.

He drew the threads together, wove the plan ;
Had lingered out by moonlight, had been seen
Strolling, as was his wont, within the walls,
Humming his ditties. So Don Alvar told,
Conveying outside rumor. But the Duke,
Making of haughtiness a visor closed,
Would show no agitated front in quest
Of small disclosures. What her writing bore
Had been enough. He knew that she was gone,
Knew why.

"The Duke," some said, "will send a force,
Retake the prisoners, and bring back his bride."
But others, winking, "Nay, her wedding dress
Would be the *san-benito*. 'T is a fight
Between the Duke and Prior. Wise bets will choose
The churchman : he 's the iron, and the Duke . . ."
"Is a fine piece of pottery," said mine host,
Softening the sarcasm with a bland regret.

There was the thread that in the new-made knot
Of obstinate circumstance seemed hardest drawn,
Vexed most the sense of Silva, in these hours
Of fresh and angry pain — there, in that fight
Against a foe whose sword was magical,
His shield invisible terrors — against a foe
Who stood as if upon the smoking mount
Ordaining plagues. All else, Fedalma's flight,
The father's claim, her Gypsy birth disclosed,
Were momentary crosses, hindrances
A Spanish noble might despise. This Chief
Might still be treated with, would not refuse
A proffered ransom, which would better serve
Gypsy prosperity, give him more power
Over his tribe, than any fatherhood :
Nay, all the father in him must plead loud
For marriage of his daughter where she loved —
Her love being placed so high and lustrously.
The Gypsy chieftain had foreseen a price
That would be paid him for his daughter's dower —
Might soon give signs. Oh, all his purpose lay
Face upward. Silva here felt strong, and smiled.
What could a Spanish noble not command ?
He only helped the Queen, because he chose ;
Could war on Spaniards, and could spare the Moor ;

Buy justice, or defeat it — if he would :
 Was loyal, not from weakness but from strength
 Of high resolve to use his birthright well.
 For nobles too are gods, like Emperors,
 Accept perforce their own divinity,
 And wonder at the virtue of their touch,
 Till obstinate resistance shakes their creed,
 Shattering that self whose wholeness is not rounded
 Save in the plastic souls of other men.
 Don Silva had been suckled in that creed
 (A high-taught speculative noble else),
 Held it absurd as foolish argument
 If any failed in deference, was too proud
 Not to be courteous to so poor a knave
 As one who knew not necessary truths
 Of birth and dues of rank ; but cross his will,
 The miracle-working will, his rage leaped out
 As by a right divine to rage more fatal
 Than a mere mortal man's. And now that will
 Had met a stronger adversary — strong
 As awful ghosts are whom we cannot touch,
 While they clutch us, subtly as poisoned air,
 In deep-laid fibres of inherited fear
 That lie below all courage.

Silva said,

"She is not lost to me, might still be mine
 But for the Inquisition — the dire hand
 That waits to clutch her with a hideous grasp
 Not passionate, human, living, but a grasp
 As in the death-throe when the human soul
 Departs and leaves force unrelenting, locked,
 Not to be loosened save by slow decay
 That frets the universe. Father Isidor
 Has willed it so : his phial dropped the oil
 To catch the air-borne notes of idle slander ;
 He fed the fascinated gaze that clung
 Round all her movements, frank as growths of spring,
 With the new hateful interest of suspicion.
 What barrier is this Gypsy ? a mere gate
 I'll find the key for. The one barrier,
 The tightening cord that winds about my limbs,
 Is this kind uncle, this imperious saint,
 He who will save me, guard me from myself.
 And he can work his will : I have no help

Save reptile secrecy, and no revenge
 Save that I *will* do what he schemes to hinder.
 Ay, secrecy, and disobedience — these
 No tyranny can master. Disobey!
 You may divide the universe with God,
 Keeping your will unbent, and hold a world
 Where He is not supreme. The Prior shall know it!
 His will shall breed resistance: he shall do
 The thing he would not, further what he hates
 By hardening my resolve."

But 'neath this speech —
 Defiant, hectoring, the more passionate voice
 Of many-blended consciousness — there breathed
 Murmurs of doubt, the weakness of a self
 That is not one; denies and yet believes;
 Protests with passion, "This is natural" —
 Yet owns the other still were truer, better,
 Could nature follow it: a self disturbed
 By budding growths of reason premature
 That breed disease. With all his outflung rage
 Silva half shrank before the steadfast man
 Whose life was one compacted whole, a realm
 Where the rule changed not, and the law was strong.
 Then that reluctant homage stirred new hate,
 And gave rebellion an intenser will.

But soon this inward strife the slow-paced hours
 Slackened; and the soul sank with hunger-pangs,
 Hunger of love. Debate was swept right down
 By certainty of loss intolerable.
 A little loss! only a dark-tressed maid
 Who had no heritage save her beauteous being!
 But in the candor of her virgin eyes
 Saying, I love; and in the mystic charm
 Of her dear presence, Silva found a heaven
 Where faith and hope were drowned as stars in day.
 Fedalma there, each momentary Now
 Seemed a whole blest existence, a full cup
 That, flowing over, asked no pouring hand
 From past to future. All the world was hers.
 Splendor was but the herald trumpet-note
 Of her imperial coming: penury
 Vanished before her as before a gem,
 The pledge of treasures. Fedalma there,

He thought all loveliness was lowlier,
 She crowning it: all goodness credible,
 Because of that great trust her goodness bred.
 For the strong current of the passionate love
 Which urged his life toward hers, like urgent floods
 That hurry through the various-mingled earth,
 Carried within its stream all qualities
 Of what it penetrated, and made love
 Only another name, as Silva was.
 For the whole man that breathed within his frame,
 And she was gone. Well, goddesses will go;
 But for a noble there were mortals left
 Shaped just like goddesses — O hateful sweet!
 O impudent pleasure that should dare to front
 With vulgar visage memories divine!
 The noble's birthright of miraculous will
 Turning *I would to must be*, spurning all
 Offered as substitute for what it chose,
 Tightened and fixed in strain irrevocable
 The passionate selection of that love
 Which came not first but as all-conquering last.
 Great Love has many attributes, and shrines
 For varied worship, but his force divine
 Shows most its many-named fulness in the man
 Whose nature multitudinously mixed —
 Each ardent impulse grappling with a thought —
 Resists all easy gladness, all content
 Save mystic rapture, where the questioning soul
 Flooded with consciousness of good that is
 Finds life one bounteous answer. So it was
 In Silva's nature, Love had mastery there,
 Not as a holiday ruler, but as one
 Who quells a tumult in a day of dread,
 A welcomed despot.

O all comforters,

All soothing things that bring mild ecstasy,
 Came with her coming, in her presence lived.
 Spring afternoons, when delicate shadows fall
 Pencilled upon the grass; high summer morns
 When white light rains upon the quiet sea
 And corn-fields flush with ripeness; odors soft —
 Dumb vagrant bliss that seems to seek a home
 And find it deep within, 'mid stirrings vague
 Of far-off moments when our life was fresh;

All sweetly-tempered music, gentle change
 Of sound, form, color, as on wide lagoons
 At sunset when from black far-floating prows
 Comes a clear wafted song; all exquisite joy
 Of a subdued desire, like some strong stream
 Made placid in the fulness of a lake —
 All came with her sweet presence, for she brought
 The love supreme which gathers to its realm
 All powers of loving. Subtle nature's hand
 Waked with a touch the far-linked harmonies
 In her own manifold work. Fedalma there,
 Fastidiousness became the prelude fine
 For full contentment; and young melancholy,
 Lost for its origin, seemed but the pain
 Of waiting for that perfect happiness.
 The happiness was gone !

He sate alone,
 Hating companionship that was not hers;
 Felt bruised with hopeless longing; drank, as wine,
 Illusions of what had been, would have been;
 Weary with anger and a strained resolve,
 Sought passive happiness in waking dreams.
 It has been so with rulers, emperors,
 Nay, sages who held secrets of great Time,
 Sharing his hoary and beneficent life —
 Men who sate throned among the multitudes —
 They have sore sickened at the loss of one.
 Silva sat lonely in her chamber, leaned
 Where she had leaned, to feel the evening breath
 Shed from the orange trees; when suddenly
 His grief was echoed in a sad young voice
 Far and yet near, brought by aerial wings.

*The world is great: the birds all fly from me,
 The stars are golden fruit upon a tree
 All out of reach: my little sister went,
 And I am lonely.*

*The world is great: I tried to mount the hill
 Above the pines, where the light lies so still,
 But it rose higher: little Lisa went,
 And I am lonely.*

*The world is great : the wind comes rushing by,
I wonder where it comes from ; sea-birds cry
And hurt my heart : my little sister went,
And I am lonely.*

*The world is great : the people laugh and talk,
And make loud holiday : how fast they walk !
I'm lame, they push me : little Lisa went,
And I am lonely.*

'T was Pablo, like the wounded spirit of song
Pouring melodious pain to cheat the hour
For idle soldiers in the castle court.
Dreamily Silva heard and hardly felt
The song was outward, rather felt it part
Of his own aching, like the lingering day,
Or slow and mournful cadence of the bell.
But when the voice had ceased he longed for it,
And fretted at the pause, as memory frets
When words that made its body fall away
And leave it yearning dumbly. Silva then
Bethought him whence the voice came, framed perforce
Some outward image of a life not his
That made a sorrowful centre to the world :
A boy lame, melancholy-eyed, who bore
A viol — yes, that very child he saw
This morning eating roots by the gateway — saw
As one fresh-ruined sees and spells a name
And knows not what he does, yet finds it writ
Full in the inner record. Hark, again !
The voice and viol. Silva called his thought
To guide his ear and track the travelling sound.

*O bird that used to press
Thy head against my cheek
With touch that seemed to speak
And ask a tender "yes" —
Ay de mi, my bird !*

*O tender downy breast
And warmly beating heart,
That beating seemed a part
Of me who gave it rest —
Ay de mi, my bird !*

The western court! The singer might be seen
 From the upper gallery: quick the Duke was there,
 Looking upon the court as on a stage.
 Men eased of armor, stretched upon the ground,
 Gambling by snatches; shepherds from the hills
 Who brought their bleating friends for slaughter;
 groomers

Shouldering loose harness; leather-aproned smiths,
 Traders with wares, green-suited serving-men,
 Made a round audience; and in their midst
 Stood little Pablo, pouring forth his song,
 Just as the Duke had pictured. But the song
 Was strangely companied by Roldan's play
 With the swift gleaming balls, and now was crushed
 By peals of laughter at grave Annibal,
 Who carrying stick and purse o'erturned the pence,
 Making mistake by rule. Silva had thought
 To melt hard bitter grief by fellowship
 With the world-sorrow trembling in his ear
 In Pablo's voice; had meant to give command
 For the boy's presence; but this company,
 This mountebank and monkey, must be — stay!
 Not be excepted — must be ordered too
 Into his private presence; they had brought
 Suggestion of a ready shapen tool
 To cut a path between his helpless wish
 And what it imaged. A ready shapen tool!
 A spy, an envoy whom he might despatch
 In unsuspected secrecy, to find
 The Gypsies' refuge so that none beside
 Might learn it. And this juggler could be bribed,
 Would have no fear of Moors — for who would kill
 Dancers and monkeys? — could pretend a journey
 Back to his home, leaving his boy the while
 To please the Duke with song. Without such chance —
 An envoy cheap and secret as a mole
 Who could go scathless, come back for his pay
 And vanish straight, tied by no neighborhood —
 Without such chance as this poor juggler brought,
 Finding Fedalma was betraying her.

Short interval betwixt the thought and deed.
 Roldan was called to private audience
 With Annibal and Pablo. All the world

(By which I mean the score or two who heard)
Shrugged high their shoulders, and supposed the Duke
Would fain beguile the evening and replace
His lacking happiness, as was the right
Of nobles, who could pay for any cure,
And wore nought broken, save a broken limb.
In truth, at first, the Duke bade Pablo sing,
But, while he sang, called Roldan wide apart,
And told him of a mission secret, brief —
A quest which well performed might earn much gold,
But, if betrayed, another sort of pay.
Roldan was ready; "wished above all for gold,
And never wished to speak; had worked enough
At wagging his old tongue and chiming jokes;
Thought it was others' turn to play the fool.
Give him but pence enough, no rabbit, sirs,
Would eat and stare and be more dumb than he.
Give him his orders."

They were given straight;
Gold for the journey, and to buy a mule
Outside the gates through which he was to pass
Afoot and carelessly. The boy would stay
Within the castle, at the Duke's command,
And must have nought but ignorance to betray
For threats or coaxing. Once the quest performed,
The news delivered with some pledge of truth
Safe to the Duke, the juggler should go forth,
A fortune in his girdle, take his boy
And settle firm as any planted tree
In fair Valencia, never more to roam.
"Good! good! most worthy of a great hidalgo!
And Roldan was the man! But Annibal —
A monkey like no other, though morose
In private character, yet full of tricks —
'T were hard to carry him, yet harder still
To leave the boy and him in company
And free to slip away. The boy was wild
And shy as mountain kid; once hid himself
And tried to run away; and Annibal,
Who always took the lad's side (he was small,
And they were nearer of a size, and, sirs,
Your monkey has a spite against us men
For being bigger) — Annibal went too.
Would hardly know himself, were he to lose

Both boy and monkey — and 't was property.
 The trouble he had put in Annibal.
 He did n't choose another man should beat
 His boy and monkey. If they ran away
 Some man would snap them up, and square himself
 And say they were his goods — he'd taught them — no!
 He Roldan had no mind another man
 Should fatten by his monkey, and the boy
 Should not be kicked by any pair of sticks
 Calling himself a juggler." . . .

But the Duke,
 Tired of that hammering, signed that it should cease;
 Bade Roldan quit all fears — the boy and ape
 Should be safe lodged in Abderahman's tower,
 In keeping of the great physician there,
 The Duke's most special confidant and friend,
 One skilled in taming brutes, and always kind.
 The Duke himself this eve would see them lodged.
 Roldan must go — spend no more words — but go.

The Astrologer's Study.

A room high up in Abderahman's tower,
 A window open to the still warm eve,
 And the bright disc of royal Jupiter.
 Lamps burning low make little atmospheres
 Of light amid the dimness; here and there
 Show books and phials, stones and instruments.
 In carved dark-oaken chair, unpillowed, sleeps
 Right in the rays of Jupiter a small man,
 In skull-cap bordered close with crisp gray curls,
 And loose black gown showing a neck and breast
 Protected by a dim-green amulet;
 Pale-faced, with finest nostril wont to breathe
 Ethereal passion in a world of thought;
 Eyebrows jet-black and firm, yet delicate;
 Beard scant and grizzled; mouth shut firm, with curves
 So subtly turned to meanings exquisite,
 You seem to read them as you read a word
 Full-vowelled, long-descended, pregnant — rich
 With legacies from long, laborious lives.
 Close by him, like a genius of sleep,
 Purrs the gray cat, bridling, with snowy breast.
 A loud knock. "Forward!" in clear vocal ring.

Enter the Duke, Pablo, and Annibal.
Exit the cat, retreating toward the dark.

DON SILVA.

You slept, Sephardo. I am come too soon.

SEPHARDO.

Nay, my lord, it was I who slept too long.
I go to court among the stars to-night,
So bathed my soul beforehand in deep sleep.
But who are these ?

DON SILVA.

Small guests, for whom I ask
Your hospitality. Their owner comes
Some short time hence to claim them. I am pledged
To keep them safely ; so I bring them you,
Trusting your friendship for small animals.

SEPHARDO.

Yea, am not I too a small animal ?

DON SILVA.

I shall be much beholden to your love
If you will be their guardian. I can trust
No other man so well as you. The boy
Will please you with his singing, touches too
The viol wondrously.

SEPHARDO.

They are welcome both.
Their names are —— ?

DON SILVA.

Pablo, this — this Annibal,
And yet, I hope, no warrior.

SEPHARDO.

We'll make peace.
Come, Pablo, let us loosen our friend's chain.
Deign you, my lord, to sit. Here Pablo, thou —
Close to my chair. Now Annibal shall choose.

[The cautious monkey, in a Moorish dress,
A tunic white, turban and scimitar,
Wears these stage garments, nay, his very flesh,
With silent protest; keeps a neutral air
As aiming at a metaphysic state
"Twixt "is" and "is not;" lets his chain be loosed
By sage Sephardo's hands, sits still at first,
Then trembles out of his neutrality,
Looks up and leaps into Sephardo's lap,
And chatters forth his agitated soul,
Turning to peep at Pablo on the floor.]

SEPHARDO.

See, he declares we are at amity!

DON SILVA.

No brother sage had read your nature faster.

SEPHARDO.

Why, so he *is* your brother sage. Man thinks
Brutes have no wisdom, since they know not his:
Can we divine their world? — the hidden life
That mirrors us as hideous shapeless power,
Cruel supremacy of sharp-edged death,
Or fate that leaves a bleeding mother robbed?
Oh, they have long tradition and swift speech,
Can tell with touches and sharp darting cries
Whole histories of timid races taught
To breathe in terror by red-handed man.

DON SILVA.

Ah, you denounce my sport with hawk and hound.
I would not have the angel Gabriel
As hard as you in noting down my sins.

SEPHARDO.

Nay, they are virtues for you warriors —
 Hawking and hunting! You are merciful
 When you leave killing men to kill the brutes.
 But, for the point of wisdom, I would choose
 To know the mind that stirs between the wings
 Of bees and building wasps, or fills the woods
 With myriad murmurs of responsive sense
 And true-aimed impulse, rather than to know
 The thoughts of warriors.

DON SILVA.

Yet they are warriors too —
 Your animals. Your judgment limps, Sephardo:
 Death is the king of this world; 't is his park
 Where he breeds life to feed him. Cries of pain
 Are music for his banquet; and the masque —
 The last grand masque for his diversion, is
 The Holy Inquisition.

SEPHARDO.

Ay, anon
 I may chime in with you. But not the less
 My judgment has firm feet. Though death were king,
 And cruelty his right-hand minister,
 Pity insurgent in some human breasts
 Makes spiritual empire, reigns supreme
 As persecuted faith in faithful hearts.
 Your small physician, weighing ninety pounds,
 A petty morsel for a healthy shark,
 Will worship mercy throned within his soul
 Though all the luminous angels of the stars
 Burst into cruel chorus on his ear,
 Singing, "We know no mercy." He would cry
 "I know it" still, and soothe the frightened bird,
 And feed the child a-hungred, walk abreast
 Of persecuted men, and keep most hate
 For rational torturers. There I stand firm.
 But you are bitter, and my speech rolls on
 Out of your note

DON SILVA.

No, no, I follow you.
I too have that within which I will worship
In spite of . . . Yes, Sephardo, I am bitter.
I need your counsel, foresight, all your aid.
Lay these small guests to bed, then we will talk.

SEPHARDO.

See, they are sleeping now. The boy has made
My leg his pillow. For my brother sage,
He 'll never heed us; he knit long ago
A sound ape-system, wherein men are brutes
Emitting doubtful noises. Pray, my lord,
Unlade what burdens you: my ear and hand
Are servants of a heart much bound to you.

DON SILVA.

Yes, yours is love that roots in gifts bestowed
By you on others, and will thrive the more
The more it gives. I have a double want:
First a confessor — not a Catholic;
A heart without a livery — naked manhood.

SEPHARDO.

My lord, I will be frank; there 's no such thing
As naked manhood. If the stars look down
On any mortal of our shape, whose strength
Is to judge all things without preference,
He is a monster, not a faithful man.
While my heart beats, it shall wear livery —
My people's livery, whose yellow badge
Marks them for Christian scorn. I will not say
Man is first man to me, then Jew or Gentile:
That suits the rich *marranos*; but to me
My father is first father and then man.
So much for frankness' sake. But let that pass.
'T is true at least, I am no Catholic
But Salomo Sephardo, a born Jew,
Willing to serve Don Silva.

DON SILVA.

Oft you sing
 Another strain, and melt distinctions down
 As no more real than the wall of dark
 Seen by small fishes' eyes, that pierce a span
 In the wide ocean. Now you league yourself
 To hem me, hold me prisoner in bonds
 Made, say you — how? — by God or Demiurge,
 By spirit or flesh — I care not! Love was made
 Stronger than bonds, and where they press must break
 them.

I came to you that I might breathe at large,
 And now you stifle me with talk of birth.
 Of race and livery. Yet you knew Fedaluna.
 She was your friend, Sephardo. And you know
 She is gone from me — know the hounds are loosed
 To dog me if I seek her.

SEPHARDO.

Yes, I know.
 Forgive me that I used untimely speech,
 Pressing a bruise. I loved her well, my lord:
 A woman mixed of such fine elements
 That were all virtue and religion dead
 She 'd make them newly, being what she was.

DON SILVA.

Was? say not *was*, Sephardo! She still lives —
 Is, and is mine; and I will not renounce
 What heaven, nay, what she gave me. I will sin,
 If sin I must, to win my life again.
 The fault lie with those powers who have embroiled
 The world in hopeless conflict, where all truth
 Fights manacled with falsehood, and all good
 Makes but one palpitating life with ill.

(DON SILVA *pauses*. SEPHARDO *is silent*.)

Sephardo, speak! am I not justified?
 You taught my mind to use the wing that soars
 Above the petty fences of the herd:
 Now, when I need your doctrine, you are dumb.

SEPHARDO.

Patience ! Hidalgos want interpreters
Of untold dreams and riddles ; they insist
On dateless horoscopes, on formulas
To raise a possible spirit, nowhere named.
Science must be their wishing-cap ; the stars
Speak plainer for high largesse. No, my lord !
I cannot counsel you to unknown deeds.
This much I can divine : you wish to find
Her whom you love — to make a secret search.

DON SILVA.

That is begun already : a messenger
Unknown to all has been despatched this night.
But forecast must be used, a plan devised,
Ready for service when my scout returns,
Bringing the invisible thread to guide my steps
Toward that lost self my life is aching with.
Sephardo, I will go : and I must go
Unseen by all save you ; though, at our need,
We may trust Alvar.

SEPHARDO.

A grave task, my lord.
Have you a shapen purpose, or mere will
That sees the end alone and not the means ?
Resolve will melt no rocks.

DON SILVA.

But it can scale them.
This fortress has two private issues : one,
Which served the Gypsies' flight, to me is closed :
Our bands must watch the outlet, now betrayed
To cunning enemies. Remains one other,
Known to no man save me : a secret left
As heirloom in our house : a secret safe
Even from him — from Father Isidor.
'T is he who forces me to use it — he :
All's virtue that cheats bloodhounds. Hear, Sephardo.

Given, my scout returns and brings me news
 I can straight act on, I shall want your aid.
 The issue lies below this tower, your fastness,
 Where, by my charter, you rule absolute.
 I shall feign illness; you with mystic air
 Must speak of treatment asking vigilance
 (Nay I *am* ill — my life has half ebb'd out).
 I shall be whimsical, devolve command
 On Don Diego, speak of poisoning,
 Insist on being lodged within this tower,
 And rid myself of tendance save from you
 And perhaps from Alvar. So I shall escape
 Unseen by spies, shall win the days I need
 To ransom her and have her safe enshrined.
 No matter, were my flight disclosed at last:
 I shall come back as from a duel fought
 Which no man can undo. Now you know all.
 Say, can I count on you?

SEPHARDO.

For faithfulness
 In aught that I may promise, yes, my lord.
 But — for a pledge of faithfulness — this warning.
 I will betray not for your personal harm:
 I love you. But note this — I am a Jew;
 And while the Christian persecutes my race,
 I'll turn at need even the Christian's trust
 Into a weapon and a shield for Jews.
 Shall Cruelty crowned — wielding the savage force
 Of multitudes, and calling savageness God
 Who gives it victory — upbraid deceit
 And ask for faithfulness? I love you well.
 You are my friend. But yet you are a Christian,
 Whose birth has bound you to the Catholic kings.
 There may come moments when to share my joy
 Would make you traitor, when to share your grief
 Would make me other than a Jew

DON SILVA.

What need
 To urge that now, Sepharo? I am one
 Of many Spanish nobles who detest
 The roaring bigotry of the herd, would fain

Dash from the lips of king and queen the cup
 Filled with besotting venom, half infused
 By avarice and half by priests. And now —
 Now when the cruelty you flout me with
 Pierces me too in the apple of my eye,
 Now when my kinship scorches me like hate
 Flashed from a mother's eye, you choose this time
 To talk of birth as of inherited rage
 Deep-down, volcanic, fatal, bursting forth
 From under hard-taught reason? Wondrous friend!
 My uncle Isidor's echo, mocking me,
 From the opposing quarter of the heavens,
 With iteration of the thing I know,
 That I'm a Christian knight and Spanish duke!
 The consequence? Why, that I know. It lies
 In my own hands and not on raven tongues.
 The knight and noble shall not wear the chain
 Of false-linked thoughts in brains of other men.
 What question was there 'twixt us two, of aught
 That makes division? When I come to you
 I come from other doctrine than the Prior's.

SEPHARDO.

My lord, you are o'erwrought by pain. My words,
 That carried innocent meaning, do but float
 Like little emptied cups upon the flood
 Your mind brings with it. I but answered you
 With regular proviso, such as stands
 In testaments and charters, to forefend
 A possible case which none deem likelihood;
 Just turned my sleeve, and pointed to the brand
 Of brotherhood that limits every pledge.
 Superfluous nicety — the student's trick,
 Who will not drink until he can define
 What water is and is not. But enough.
 My will to serve you now knows no division
 Save the alternate beat of love and fear.
 There's danger in this quest — name, honor, life —
 My lord, the stake is great, and are you sure

DON SILVA.

No, I am sure of nought but this, SepharDO,
 That I will go. Prudence is but conceit

Hoodwinked by ignorance. There's nought exists
That is not dangerous and holds not death
For souls or bodies. Prudence turns its helm
To flee the storm and lands 'mid pestilence.
Wisdom would end by throwing dice with folly
But for dire passion which alone makes choice.
And I have chosen as the lion robbed
Chooses to turn upon the ravisher.
If love were slack, the Prior's imperious will
Would move it to outmatch him. But, Sephardo,
Were all else mute, all passive as sea-calms,
My soul is one great hunger — I must see her.
Now you are smiling. Oh, you merciful men
Pick up coarse griefs and fling them in the face
Of us whom life with long descent has trained
To subtler pains, mocking your ready balms.
You smile at my soul's hunger.

SEPHARDO.

Science smiles
And sways our lips in spite of us, my lord,
When thought weds fact — when maiden prophecy
Waiting, believing, sees the bridal torch.
I use not vulgar measures for your grief,
My pity keeps no cruel feasts; but thought
Has joys apart, even in blackest woe,
And seizing some fine thread of verity
Knows momentary godhead.

DON SILVA.

And your thought?

SEPHARDO.

Seized on the close agreement of your words
With what is written in your horoscope.

DON SILVA.

Reach it me now.

SEPHARDO.

By your leave, Annibal.

(He places ANNIBAL on PABLO's lap and rises. The boy moves without waking, and his head falls on the opposite side. SEPHARDO fetches a cushion and lays PABLO's head gently down upon it, then goes to reach the parchment from a cabinet. ANNIBAL, having waked up in alarm, shuts his eyes quickly again and pretends to sleep.)

DON SILVA.

I wish, by new appliance of your skill,
 Reading afresh the records of the sky,
 You could detect more special augury.
 Such chance oft happens, for all characters
 Must shrink or widen, as our wine-skins do,
 For more or less that we can pour in them;
 And added years give ever a new key
 To fixed prediction.

SEPHARDO *(returning with the parchment and reseating himself)*.

True; our growing thought
 Makes growing revelation. But demand not
 Specific augury, as of sure success
 In meditated projects, or of ends
 To be foreknown by peeping in God's scroll.
 I say — nay, Ptolemy said it, but wise books
 For half the truths they hold are honored tombs —
 Prediction is contingent, of effects
 Where causes and concomitants are mixed
 To seeming wealth of possibilities
 Beyond our reckoning. Who will pretend
 To tell the adventures of each single fish
 Within the Syrian Sea? Show me a fish,
 I'll weigh him, tell his kind, what he devoured,
 What would have devoured *him* — but for one Blas
 Who netted him instead; nay, could I tell

That had Blas missed him, he would not have died
Of poisonous mud, and so made carrion,
Swept off at last by some sea-scavenger ?

DON SILVA.

Ay, now you talk of fishes, you get hard.
I note you merciful men : you can endure
Torture of fishes and hidalgos. Follows ?

SEPHARDO.

By how much, then, the fortunes of a man
Are made of elements refined and mixed
Beyond a tunny's, what our science tells
Of the star's influence hath contingency
In special issues. Thus, the loadstone draws,
Acts like a will to make the iron submit ;
But garlick rubbing it, that chief effect
Lies in suspense ; the iron keeps at large,
And garlick is controller of the stone.
And so, my lord, your horoscope declares
Not absolutely of your sequent lot,
But, by our lore's authentic rules, sets forth
What gifts, what dispositions, likelihoods,
The aspects of the heavens conspired to fuse
With your incorporate soul. Aught more than this
Is vulgar doctrine. For the ambient,
Though a cause regnant, is not absolute,
But suffers a determining restraint
From action of the subject qualities
In proximate motion.

DON SILVA.

Yet you smiled just now
At some close fitting of my horoscope
With present fact — with this resolve of mine
To quit the fortress ?

SEPHARDO.

Nay, not so ; I smiled,
Observing how the temper of your soul
Sealed long tradition of the influence shed

By the heavenly spheres. Here is your horoscope :
The aspects of the Moon with Mars conjunct,
Of Venus and the Sun with Saturn, lord
Of the ascendent, make symbolic speech
Whereto your words gave running paraphrase.

DON SILVA (*impatiently*).

What did I say ?

SEPHARDO.

You spoke as oft you did
When I was schooling you at Córdoba,
And lessons on the noun and verb were drowned
With sudden stream of general debate
On things and actions. Always in that stream
I saw the play of babbling currents, saw
A nature o'er-endowed with opposites
Making a self alternate, where each hour
Was critic of the last, each mood too strong
For tolerance of its fellow in close yoke.
The ardent planets stationed as supreme,
Potent in action, suffer light malign
From luminaries large and coldly bright
Inspiring meditative doubt, which straight
Doubts of itself, by interposing act
Of Jupiter in the fourth house fortified
With power ancestral. So, my lord, I read
The changeless in the changing ; so I read
The constant action of celestial powers
Mixed into waywardness of mortal men,
Whereof no sage's eye can trace the course
And see the close.

DON SILVA.

Fruitful result, O sage !

Certain uncertainty.

SEPHARDO.

Yea, a result
Fruitful as seeded earth, where certainty
Would be as barren as a globe of gold.
I love you, and would serve you well, my lord.

Your rashness vindicates itself too much,
 Puts harness on of cobweb theory
 While rushing like a cataract. Be warned.
 Resolve with you is a fire-breathing steed,
 But it sees visions, and may feel the air
 Impassable with thoughts that come too late,
 Rising from out the grave of murdered honor.
 Look at your image in your horoscope :
(Laying the horoscope before DON SILVA.)
 You are so mixed, my lord, that each to-day
 May seem a maniac to its morrow.

DON SILVA *(pushing away the horoscope, rising and
 turning to look out at the open window).*
 No !

No morrow e'er will say that I am mad
 Not to renounce her. Risks ! I know them all.
 I've dogged each lurking, ambushed consequence.
 I've handled every chance to know its shape
 As blind men handle bolts. Oh, I'm too sane !
 I see the Prior's nets. He does my deed ;
 For he has narrowed all my life to this —
 That I must find her by some hidden means.
(He turns and stands close in front of SEPHARDO.)

One word, SepharDO — leave that horoscope,
 Which is but iteration of myself,
 And give me promise. Shall I count on you
 To act upon my signal ? Kings of Spain
 Like me have found their refuge in a Jew,
 And trusted in his counsel. You will help me ?

SEPHARDO.

Yes, my lord, I will help you. Israel
 Is to the nations as the body's heart :
 Thus writes our poet Jehuda. I will act
 So that no man may ever say through me
 "Your Israel is nought," and make my deeds
 The mud they fling upon my brethren.
 I will not fail you, save — you know the terms :
 I am a Jew, and not that infamous life
 That takes on bastardy, will know no father,
 So shrouds itself in the pale abstract, Man.
 You should be sacrificed to Israel
 If Israel needed it.

DON SILVA.

I fear not that.

I am no friend of fines and banishment,
Or flames that, fed on heretics, still gape,
And must have heretics made to feed them still.
I take your terms, and for the rest, your love
Will not forsake me.

SEPHARDO.

'Tis hard Roman love,
That looks away and stretches forth the sword
Bared for its master's breast to run upon.
But you will have it so. Love shall obey.
(DON SILVA turns to the window again, and is silent
for a few moments, looking at the sky.)

DON SILVA.

See now, Sephardo, you would keep no faith
To smooth the path of cruelty. Confess,
The deed I would not do, save for the strait
Another brings me to (quit my command,
Resign it for brief space, I mean no more) —
Were that deed branded, then the brand should fix
On him who urged me.

SEPHARDO.

Will it, though, my lord ?

DON SILVA.

I speak not of the fact but of the right.

SEPHARDO.

My lord, you said but now you were resolved.
Question not if the world will be unjust
Branding your deed. If conscience has two courts
With differing verdicts, where shall lie the appeal ?
Our law must be without us or within.

The Highest speaks through all our people's voice,
Custom, tradition, and old sanctities;
Or he reveals himself by new decrees
Of inward certitude.

DON SILVA.

My love for her
Makes highest law, must be the voice of God.

SEPHARDO.

I thought, but now, you seemed to make excuse,
And plead as in some court where Spanish knights
Are tried by other laws than those of love.

DON SILVA.

'T was momentary. I shall dare it all.
How the great planet glows, and looks at me,
And seems to pierce me with his effluence!
Were he a living God, these rays that stir
In me the pulse of wonder were in him
Fulness of knowledge. Are you certified,
Sephardo, that the astral science shrinks
To such pale ashes, dead symbolic forms
For that congenital mixture of effects
Which life declares without the aid of lore?
If there are times propitious or malign
To our first framing, then must all events
Have favoring periods: you cull your plants
By signal of the heavens, then why not trace
As others would by astrologic rule
Times of good augury for momentous acts, —
As secret journeys?

SEPHARDO.

Oh, my lord, the stars
Act not as witchcraft or as muttered spells.
I said before they are not absolute,
And tell no fortunes. I adhere alone
To such tradition of their agencies
As reason fortifies.

DON SILVA.

A barren science!
Some argue now 't is folly. 'T were as well
Be of their mind. If those bright stars had will —
But they are fatal fires, and know no love.
Of old, I think, the world was happier
With many gods, who held a struggling life
As mortals do, and helped men in the straits
Of forced misdoing. I doubt that horoscope.

(DON SILVA turns from the window and reseats himself opposite SEPHARDO.)

I am most self-contained, and strong to bear.
No man save you has seen my trembling lip
Utter her name, since she was lost to me.
I'll face the progeny of all my deeds.

SEPHARDO.

May they be fair! No horoscope makes slaves.
'T is but a mirror, shows one image forth,
And leaves the future dark with endless "ifs."

DON SILVA.

I marvel, my Sephardo, you can pinch
With confident selection these few grains,
And call them verity, from out the dust
Of crumbling error. Surely such thought creeps,
With insect exploration of the world.
Were I a Hebrew, now, I would be bold.
Why should you fear, not being Catholic?

SEPHARDO.

Lo! you yourself, my lord, mix subtleties
With gross belief; by momentary lapse
Conceive, with all the vulgar, that we Jews
Must hold ourselves God's outlaws, and defy
All good with blasphemy, because we hold
Your good is evil; think we must turn pale
To see our portraits painted in your hell,
And sin the more for knowing we are lost.

DON SILVA.

Read not my words with malice. I but meant,
My temper hates an over-cautious march.

SEPHARDO.

The Unnamable made not the search for truth
To suit hidalgos' temper. I abide
By that wise spirit of listening reverence
Which marks the boldest doctors of our race.
For Truth, to us, is like a living child
Born of two parents : if the parents part
And will divide the child, how shall it live ?
Or, I will rather say : Two angels guide
The path of man, both aged and yet young,
As angels are, ripening through endless years.
On one he leans : some call her Memory,
And some, Tradition ; and her voice is sweet,
With deep mysterious accords : the other,
Floating above, holds down a lamp which streams
A light divine and searching on the earth,
Compelling eyes and footsteps. Memory yields,
Yet clings with loving check, and shines anew
Reflecting all the rays of that bright lamp
Our angel Reason holds. We had not walked
But for Tradition ; we walk evermore
To higher paths, by brightening Reason's lamp.
Still we are purblind, tottering. I hold less
Than Aben-Ezra, of that aged lore
Brought by long centuries from Chaldæan plains ;
The Jew-taught Florentine rejects it all.
For still the light is measured by the eye,
And the weak organ fails. I may see ill ;
But over all belief is faithfulness,
Which fulfils vision with obedience.
So, I must grasp my morsels : truth is oft
Scattered in fragments round a stately pile
Built half of error ; and the eye's defect
May breed too much denial. But, my lord,
I weary your sick soul. Go now with me
Into the turret. We will watch the spheres,
And see the constellations bend and plunge

Into a depth of being where our eyes
 Hold them no more. We'll quit ourselves and be
 The red Aldebaran or bright Sirius,
 And sail as in a solemn voyage, bound
 On some great quest we know not.

DON SILVA.

Let us go.
 She may be watching too, and thought of her
 Sways me, as if she knew, to every act
 Of pure allegiance.

SEPHARDO.

That is love's perfection —
 Tuning the soul to all her harmonies
 So that no cord can jar. Now we will mount.

A large hall in the Castle, of Moorish architecture. On the side where the windows are, an outer gallery. Pages and other young gentlemen attached to DON SILVA's household, gathered chiefly at one end of the hall. Some are moving about; others are lounging on the carved benches; others, half stretched on pieces of matting and carpet, are gambling. ARIAS, a stripling of fifteen, sings by snatches in a boyish treble, as he walks up and down, and tosses back the nuts which another youth flings towards him. In the middle DON AMADOR, a gaunt, gray-haired soldier, in a handsome uniform, sits in a marble red-cushioned chair, with a large book spread out on his knees, from which he is reading aloud. While his voice is half drowned by the talk that is going on around him, first one voice and then another surging above the hum.

ARIAS (*singing*).

*There was a holy hermit
 Who counted all things loss
 For Christ his Master's glory:
 He made an ivory cross,*

POEMS OF GEORGE ELIOT.

*And as he knelt before it
And wept his murdered Lord,
The ivory turned to iron,
The cross became a sword.*

JOSÉ (*from the floor*).

I say, twenty cruzados ! thy Galician wit can never count.

HERNANDO (*also from the floor*).

And thy Sevillian wit always counts double.

ARIAS (*singing*).

*The tears that fell upon it,
They turned to red, red rust,
The tears that fell from off it
Made writing in the dust.
The holy hermit, gazing,
Saw words upon the ground :
" The sword be red for ever
With the blood of false Mahound."*

DON AMADOR (*looking up from his book, and raising his voice*).

What, gentlemen ! Our Glorious Lady defend us !

ENRIQUEZ (*from the benches*).

Serves the infidels right ! They have sold Christians enough to people half the towns in Paradise. If the Queen, now, had divided the pretty damsels of Malaga among the Castilians who have been helping in the holy war, and not sent half of them to Naples . . .

ARIAS (*singing again*).

*At the battle of Clavijo
In the days of King Ramiro.
Help us, Allah ! cried the Moslem,
Cried the Spaniard, Heaven's chosen,
God and Santiago !*

FABIAN.

Oh, the very tail of our chance has vanished. The royal my is breaking up — going home for the winter. The Grand aster sticks to his own border.

ARIAS (*singing*).

*Straight out-flushing like the rainbow,
See him come, celestial Baron,
Mounted knight, with red-crossed banner,
Plunging earthward to the battle,
Glorious Santiago!*

HURTADO.

Yes, yes, through the pass of By-and-by, you go to the valley Never. We might have done a great feat, if the Marquis Cadiz . . .

ARIAS (*sings*).

*As the flame before the swift wind,
See, he fires us, we burn with him!
Flash our swords, dash Pagans backward —
Victory he! pale fear is Allah!
God with Santiago!*

DON AMADOR (*raising his voice to a cry*).

Sangre de Dios, gentlemen!

(*He shuts the book, and lets it fall with a bang on the floor. There is instant silence.*)

To what good end is it that I, who studied at Salamanca, d can write verses agreeable to the Glorious Lady with the int of a sword which hath done harder service, am reading oud in a clerkly manner from a book which hath been culled om the flowers of all books, to instruct you in the knowledge fitting those who would be knights and worthy hidalgos? ad as lief be reading in a belfry. And gambling too! As it were a time when we needed not the help of God and the nts! Surely for the space of one hour ye might subdue ur tongues to your ears, that so your tongues might learn newhat of civility and modesty. Wherefore am I master

of the Duke's retinue, if my voice is to run along like a gutter in a storm ?

HURTADO (*lifting up the book, and respectfully presenting it to DON AMADOR.*)

Pardon, Don Amador ! The air is so commoved by your voice, that it stirs our tongues in spite of us.

DON AMADOR (*reopening the book*).

Confess, now, it is a goose-headed trick, that when rational sounds are made for your edification, you find nought in it but an occasion for purposeless gabble. I will report it to the Duke, and the reading-time shall be doubled, and my office of reader shall be handed over to Fray Domingo.

(*While DON AMADOR has been speaking, DON SILVA, with DON ALVAR, has appeared walking in the outer gallery on which the windows are opened.*)

ALL (*in concert*).

No, no, no.

DON AMADOR.

Are ye ready, then, to listen, if I finish the wholesome extract from the Seven Parts, wherein the wise King Alfonso hath set down the reason why knights should be of gentle birth ? Will ye now be silent ?

ALL.

Yes, silent.

DON AMADOR.

But when I pause, and look up, I give any leave to speak, if he hath augth pertinent to say.

(*Reads.*)

" And this nobility cometh in three ways : *first*, by lineage, *secondly*, by science, and *thirdly*, by valor and worthy behavior. Now, although they who gain nobility through science or good deeds are rightfully called noble and gentle ; nevertheless, they are with the highest fitness so called who are noble by ancient lineage, and lead a worthy life as by inheritance from afar ;

and hence are more bound and constrained to act well, and guard themselves from error and wrong-doing; for in their case it is more true that by evil-doing they bring injury and shame not only on themselves, but also on those from whom they are derived."

DON AMADOR (*placing his forefinger for a mark on the page, and looking up while he keeps his voice raised, as wishing DON SILVA to overhear him in the judicious discharge of his function*).

Hear ye that, young gentlemen? See ye not that if ye have but bad manners even, they disgrace you more than gross misdoings disgrace the low-born? Think you, Arias, it becomes the son of your house irreverently to sing and fling nuts, to the interruption of your elders?

ARIAS (*sitting on the floor, and leaning backward on his elbows*).

Nay, Don Amador; King Alfonso, they say, was a heretic, and I think that is not true writing. For noble birth gives us more leave to do ill if we like.

DON AMADOR (*lifting his brows*).

What bold and blasphemous talk is this?

ARIAS.

Why, nobles are only punished now and then, in a grand way, and have their heads cut off, like the Grand Constable. I shouldn't mind that.

JOSÉ.

Nonsense, Arias! nobles have their heads cut off because their crimes are noble. If they did what was unknightly, they would come to shame. Is not that true, Don Amador?

DON AMADOR.

Arias is a contumacious puppy, who will bring dishonor on his parentage. Pray, sirrah, whom did you ever hear speak as you have spoken?

ARIAS.

Nay, I speak out of my own head. I shall go and ask the Duke.

HURTADO.

Now, now! you are too bold, Arias.

ARIAS.

Oh, he is never angry with me, — (*Dropping his voice*) because the Lady Fedalma liked me. She said I was a good boy, and pretty, and that is what you are not, Hurtado.

HURTADO.

Girl-face! See, now, if you dare ask the Duke.

(*DON SILVA is just entering the hall from the gallery, with DON ALVAR behind him, intending to pass out at the other end. All rise with homage. DON SILVA bows coldly and abstractedly. ARIAS advances from the group, and goes up to DON SILVA.*)

ARIAS.

My lord, is it true that a noble is more dishonored than other men if he does aught dishonorable?

DON SILVA (*first blushing deeply, and grasping his sword, then raising his hand and giving*
ARIAS a blow on the ear).

Varlet!

ARIAS.

My lord, I am a gentleman.
(*DON SILVA pushes him away, and passes on hurriedly.*)

DON ALVAR (*following and turning to speak*).

Go, go! you should not speak to the Duke when you are not called upon. He is ill and much distempered.

(*ARIAS retires, flushed, with tears in his eyes. His companions look too much surprised to triumph.*

DON AMADOR *remains silent and confused.*)

The Plaza Santiago during busy market-time. Mules and asses laden with fruits and vegetables. Stalls and booths filled with wares of all sorts. A crowd of buyers and sellers. A stalwart woman, with keen eyes, leaning over the panniers of a mule laden with apples watches LORENZO, who is lounging through the market. As he approaches her, he is met by BLASCO.

LORENZO.

Well met, friend.

BLASCO.

Ay, for we are soon to part,
And I would see you at the hostelry,
To take my reckoning. I go forth to-day.

LORENZO.

'T is grievous parting with good company.
I would I had the gold to pay such guests
For all my pleasure in their talk.

BLASCO.

Why, yes;

A solid-headed man of Aragon
Has matter in him that you Southerners lack.
You like my company — 't is natural.
But, look you, I have done my business well,
Have sold and ta'en commissions. I come straight
From — you know who — I like not naming him.
I'm a thick man: you reach not my backbone
With any tooth-pick; but I tell you this:
He reached it with his eye, right to the marrow.

It gave me heart that I had plate to sell,
 For, saint or no saint, a good silversmith
 Is wanted for God's service ; and my plate —
 He judged it well — bought nobly.

LORENZO.

And holy ! A great man,

BLASCO.

Yes, I 'm glad I leave to-day.
 For there are stories give a sort of smell —
 One's nose has fancies. A good trader, sir,
 Likes not this plague of lapsing in the air,
 Most caught by men with funds. And they *do* say
 There 's a great terror here in Moors and Jews,
 I would say, Christians of unhappy blood.
 'Tis monstrous, sure, that men of substance lapse,
 And risk their property. I know I 'm sound.
 No heresy was ever bait to me. Whate'er
 Is the right faith, that I believe — nought else.

LORENZO.

Ay, truly, for the flavor of true faith
 Once known must sure be sweetest to the taste.
 But an uneasy mood is now abroad
 Within the town ; partly, for that the Duke
 Being sorely sick, has yielded the command
 To Don Diego, a most valiant man,
 More Catholic than the Holy Father's self,
 Half chiding God that He will tolerate
 A Jew or Arab ; though 't is plain they 're made
 For profit of good Christians. And weak heads —
 Panic will knit all disconnected facts —
 Draw hence belief in evil auguries,
 Rumors of accusation and arrest,
 All air-begotten. Sir, you need not go.
 But if it must be so, I 'll follow you
 In fifteen minutes — finish marketing,
 Then be at home to speed you on your way.

BLASCO.

Do so. I'll back to Saragossa straight.
 The court and nobles are retiring now
 And wending northward. There'll be fresh demand
 For bells and images against the Spring,
 When doubtless our great Catholic sovereigns
 Will move to conquest of these eastern parts,
 And cleanse Granada from the infidel.
 Stay, sir, with God, until we meet again!

LORENZO.

Go, sir, with God, until I follow you!
*(Exit BLASCO. LORENZO passes on towards the
 market-woman, who, as he approaches, raises her-
 self from her leaning attitude.)*

LORENZO.

Good day, my mistress. How's your merchandise?
 Fit for a host to buy? Your apples now,
 They have fair cheeks; how are they at the core?

MARKET-WOMAN.

Good, good, sir! Taste and try. See, here is one
 Weighs a man's head. The best are bound with tow:
 They're worth the pains, to keep the peel from splits.
*(She takes out an apple bound with tow, and, as she
 puts it into LORENZO's hand, speaks in a lower
 tone.)*

"T is called the Miracle. You open it,
 And find it full of speech.

LORENZO.

Ay, give it me,
 I'll take it to the Doctor in the tower.
 He feeds on fruit, and if he likes the sort
 I'll buy them for him. Meanwhile drive your ass
 Round to my hostelry. I'll straight be there.
 You'll not refuse some barter?

MARKET-WOMAN.

No, not I.

Feathers and skins.

LORENZO.

Good, till we meet again.

(LORENZO, after smelling at the apple, puts it into a pouch-like basket which hangs before him, and walks away. The woman drives off the mule.)

A LETTER.

"Zarca, the chieftain of the Gypsies, greets
 "The King El Zagal. Let the force be sent
 "With utmost swiftness to the Pass of Luz.
 "A good five hundred added to my bands
 "Will master all the garrison: the town
 "Is half with us, and will not lift an arm
 "Save on our side. My scouts have found a way
 "Where once we thought the fortress most secure:
 "Spying a man upon the height, they traced,
 "By keen conjecture piecing broken sight,
 "His downward path, and found its issue. There
 "A file of us can mount, surprise the fort
 "And give the signal to our friends within
 "To ope the gates for our confederate bands,
 "Who will lie eastward ambushed by the rocks,
 "Waiting the night. Enough; give me command,
 "Bednár is yours. Chief Zarca will redeem
 "His pledge of highest service to the Moor:
 "Let the Moor too be faithful and repay
 "The Gypsy with the furtherance he needs
 "To lead his people over Bahr el Scham
 "And plant them on the shore of Africa.
 "So may the King El Zagal live as one
 "Who, trusting Allah will be true to him,
 "Maketh himself as Allah true to friends."

BOOK III.

QUIT now the town, and with a journeying dream
Swift as the wings of sound yet seeming slow
Through multitudinous pulsing of stored sense
And spiritual space, see walls and towers
Lie in the silent whiteness of a trance,
Giving no sign of that warm life within
That moves and murmurs through their hidden heart.
Pass o'er the mountain, wind in sombre shade,
Then wind into the light and see the town
Shrunk to white crust upon the darker rock.
Turn east and south, descend, then rise anew
'Mid smaller mountains ebbing towards the plain:
Scent the fresh breath of the height-loving herbs
That, trodden by the pretty parted hoofs
Of nimble goats, sigh at the innocent bruise,
And with a mingled difference exquisite
Pour a sweet burden on the buoyant air.
Pause now and be all ear. Far from the south,
Seeking the listening silence of the heights,
Comes a slow-dying sound — the Moslems' call
To prayer in afternoon. Bright in the sun
Like tall white sails on a green shadowy sea
Stand Moorish watch-towers: 'neath that eastern sky
Couches unseen the strength of Moorish Baza;
Where the meridian bends lies Guadix, hold
Of brave El Zagal. This is Moorish land,
Where Allah lives unconquered in dark breasts
And blesses still the many-nourishing earth
With dark-armed industry. See from the steep
The scattered olives hurry in gray throngs
Down towards the valley, where the little stream
Parts a green hollow 'twixt the gentler slopes;
And in that hollow, dwellings: not white homes

Of building Moors, but little swarthy tents
Such as of old perhaps on Asian plains,
Or wending westward past the Caucasus,
Our fathers raised to rest in. Close they swarm
About two taller tents, and viewed afar
Might seem a dark-robed crowd in penitence
That silent kneel; but come now in their midst
And watch a busy, bright-eyed, sportive life!
Tall maidens bend to feed the tethered goat,
The ragged kirtle fringing at the knee
Above the living curves, the shoulder's smoothness
Parting the torrent strong of ebon hair.
Women with babes, the wild and neutral glance
Swayed now to sweet desire of mothers' eyes,
Rock their strong cradling arms and chant low strains
Taught by monotonous and soothing winds
That fall at night-time on the dozing ear.
The crones plait reeds, or shred the vivid herbs
Into the caldron: tiny urchins crawl
Or sit and gurgle forth their infant joy.
Lads lying sphynx-like with uplifted breast
Propped on their elbows, their black manes tossed back,
Fling up the coin and watch its fatal fall,
Dispute and scramble, run and wrestle fierce,
Then fall to play and fellowship again;
Or in a thieving swarm they run to plague
The grandsires, who return with rabbits slung.
And with the mules fruit-laden from the fields.
Some striplings choose the smooth stones from the brook
To serve the slingers, cut the twigs for snares,
Or trim the hazel-wands, or at the bark
Of some exploring dog they dart away
With swift precision towards a moving speck.
These are the brood of Zarca's Gypsy tribe;
Most like an earth-born race bred by the Sun
On some rich tropic soil, the father's light
Flashing in coal-black eyes, the mother's blood
With bounteous elements feeding their young limbs.
The stalwart men and youths are at the wars
Following their chief, all save a trusty band
Who keep strict watch along the northern heights.

But see, upon a pleasant spot removed
From the camp's hubbub, where the thicket strong

Of huge-eared cactus makes a bordering curve
And casts a shadow, lies a sleeping man
With Spanish hat screening his upturned face,
His doublet loose, his right arm backward flung,
His left caressing close the long-necked lute
That seems to sleep too, leaning tow'ards its lord.
He draws deep breath secure but not unwatched.
Moving a-tiptoe, silent as the elves,
As mischievous too, trip three bare-footed girls
Not opened yet to womanhood — dark flowers
In slim long buds : some paces farther off
Gathers a little white-teethed shaggy group,
A grinning chorus to the merry play.
The tripping girls have robbed the sleeping man
Of all his ornaments. Hita is decked
With an embroidered scarf across her rags ;
Tralla, with thorns for pins, sticks two rosettes
Upon her threadbare woollen ; Hinda now,
Prettiest and boldest, tucks her kirtle up
As wallet for the stolen buttons — then
Bends with her knife to cut from off the hat
The aigrette and long feather ; deftly cuts,
Yet wakes the sleeper, who with sudden start
Shakes off the masking hat and shows the face
Of Juan : Hinda swift as thought leaps back,
But carries off the spoil triumphantly,
And leads the chorus of a happy laugh,
Running with all the naked-footed imps,
Till with safe survey all can face about
And watch for signs of stimulating chase,
While Hinda ties long grass around her brow
To stick the feather in with majesty.
Juan still sits contemplative, with looks
Alternate at the spoilers and their work.

JUAN.

Ah, you marauding kite — my feather gone !
My belt, my scarf, my buttons and rosettes !
This is to be a brother of your tribe !
The fiery-blooded children of the Sun —
So says chief Zarca — children of the Sun !
Ay, ay, the black and stinging flies he breeds
To plague the decent body of mankind.

"Orpheus, professor of the *gai saber*,
 Made all the brutes polite by dint of song."
 Pregnant — but as a guide in daily life
 Delusive. For if song and music cure
 The barbarous trick of thieving, 't is a cure
 That works as slowly as old Doctor Time
 In curing folly. Why, the minxes there
 Have rhythm in their toes, and music rings
 As readily from them as from little bells
 Swung by the breeze. Well, I will try the physic.
 (*He touches his lute.*)

Hem! taken rightly, any single thing,
 The Rabbis say, implies all other things.
 A knotty task, though, the unravelling
Meum and *Tuum* from a saraband:
 It needs a subtle logic, nay, perhaps
 A good large property, to see the thread.
 (*He touches the lute again.*)

There's more of odd than even in this world.
 Else pretty sinners would not be let off
 Sooner than ugly; for if honeycombs
 Are to be got by stealing, they should go
 Where life is bitterest on the tongue. And yet —
 Because this minx has pretty ways I wink
 At all her tricks, though if a flat-faced lass,
 With eyes askew, were half as bold as she,
 I would chastise her with a hazel switch.
 I'm a plucked peacock — even my voice and wit
 Without a tail! — why, any fool detects
 The absence of your tail, but twenty fools
 May not detect the presence of your wit.
 (*He touches his lute again.*)

Well, I must coax my tail back cunningly,
 For to run after these brown lizards — ah!
 I think the lizards lift their ears at this.

(*As he thrums his lute the lads and girls gradually approach: he touches it more briskly, and HINDA, advancing, begins to move arms and legs with an initiatory dancing movement, smiling coaxingly at JUAN. He suddenly stops, lays down his lute and folds his arms.*)

JUAN.

What, you expect a tune to dance to, eh?

HINDA, HITA, TRALLA, AND THE REST
(clapping their hands).

Yes, yes, a tune, a tune!

JUAN.

But that is what you cannot have, my sweet brothers and sisters. The tunes are all dead — dead as the tunes of the lark when you have plucked his wings off; dead as the song of the grasshopper when the ass has swallowed him. I can play and sing no more. Hinda has killed my tunes.

(All cry out in consternation. HINDA gives a wail and tries to examine the lute.)

JUAN (waving her off).

Understand, Señora Hinda, that the tunes are in me; they are not in the lute till I put them there. And if you cross my humor, I shall be as tuneless as a bag of wool. If the tunes are to be brought to life again, I must have my feather back.

(HINDA kisses his hands and feet coaxingly.)

No, no! not a note will come for coaxing. The feather, say, the feather!

(HINDA sorrowfully takes off the feather, and gives it to JUAN.)

Ah, now let us see. Perhaps a tune will come.

(He plays a measure, and the three girls begin to dance; then he suddenly stops.)

JUAN.

No, the tune will not come: it wants the aigrette (pointing to it on Hinda's neck).

(HINDA, with rather less hesitation, but again sorrowfully, takes off the aigrette, and gives it to him.)

JUAN.

Ha! (*He plays again, but, after rather a longer time, again stops.*) No, no; 't is the buttons are wanting, Hinda, the buttons. This tune feeds chiefly on buttons — a greedy tune. It wants one, two, three, four, five, six. Good!

(*After HINDA has given up the buttons, and JUAN has laid them down one by one, he begins to play again, going on longer than before; so that the dancers become excited by the movement. Then he stops.*)

JUAN.

Ah, Hita, it is the belt, and, Tralla, the rosettes — both are wanting. I see the tune will not go on without them.

(*HITA and TRALLA take off the belt and rosettes, and lay them down quickly, being fired by the dancing, and eager for the music. All the articles lie by JUAN's side on the ground.*)

JUAN.

Good, good, my docile wild-cats! Now I think the tunes are all alive again. Now you may dance and sing too. Hinda, my little screamer, lead off with the song I taught you, and let us see if the tune will go right on from beginning to end.

(*He plays. The dance begins again, HINDA singing. All the other boys and girls join in the chorus, and all at last dance wildly.*)

SONG.

*All things journey: sun and moon,
Morning, noon, and afternoon,
Night and all her stars:
'Twixt the east and western bars
Round they journey,
Come and go!
We go with them!
For to roam and ever roam
Is the Zínculí's loved home.*

*Earth is good, the hillside breaks
By the ashen roots and makes
Hungry nostrils glad :
Then we run till we are mad,
Like the horses,
And we cry,
None shall catch us !
Swift winds wing us — we are free —
Drink the air — we Zíncali !*

*Falls the snow : the pine-branch split,
Call the fire out, see it flit,
Through the dry leaves run,
Spread and glow, and make a sun
In the dark tent :
O warm dark !
Warm as conies !
Strong fire loves us, we are warm !
Who the Zíncali shall harm ?*

*Onward journey : fires are spent ;
Sunward, sunward ! lift the tent,
Run before the rain,
Through the pass, along the plain.
Hurry, hurry,
Lift us, wind !
Like the horses.
For to roam and ever roam
Is the Zíncali's loved home.*

(When the dance is at its height, HINDA breaks away from the rest, and dances round JUAN, who is now standing. As he turns a little to watch her movement, some of the boys skip towards the feather, aigrette, etc., snatch them up, and run away, swiftly followed by HITA, TRALLA, and the rest. HINDA, as she turns again, sees them, screams, and falls in her whirling ; but immediately gets up, and rushes after them, still screaming with rage.)

JUAN.

Antíago ! these imps get bolder. Haha ! Señora Hinda, ~ finishes your lesson in ethics. You have seen the advan-

tage of giving up stolen goods. Now you see the ugliness of thieving when practised by others. That fable of mine about the tunes was excellently devised. I feel like an ancient sage instructing our lisping ancestors. My memory will descend as the Orpheus of Gypsies. But I must prepare a rod for those rascals. I'll bastinado them with prickly pears. It seems to me these needles will have a sound moral teaching in them.

(While JUAN takes a knife from his belt, and surveys a bush of the prickly pear, HINDA returns.)

JUAN.

Pray, Señora, why do you fume? Did you want to steal my ornaments again yourself?

HINDA *(sobbing)*.

No; I thought you would give them me back again.

JUAN.

What, did you want the tunes to die again? Do you like finery better than dancing?

HINDA.

Oh, that was a tale! I shall tell tales too, when I want to get anything I can't steal. And I know what I will do. I shall tell the boys I've found some little foxes, and I will never say where they are till they give me back the feather!
(She runs off again.)

JUAN.

Hem! the disciple seems to seize the mode sooner than the matter. Teaching virtue with this prickly pear may only teach the youngsters to use a new weapon; as your teaching orthodoxy with faggots may only bring up a fashion of roasting. Dios! my remarks grow too pregnant — my wits get a plethora by solitary feeding on the produce of my own wisdom.

(As he puts up his knife again, HINDA comes running back, and crying, "Our Queen! our Queen!" JUAN adjusts his garments and his lute, while HINDA turns to meet FEDALMA, who wears a Moorish dress, her black hair hanging round her in plaits, a white turban on her head, a dagger by her side. She carries a scarf on her left arm, which she holds up as a shade.)

FEDALMA (*putting HINDA's head*).

How now, wild one? You are hot and panting. Go to my tent, and help Nouna to plait reeds.

(*HINDA kisses FEDALMA's hand, and runs off*. FEDALMA advances towards JUAN, who kneels to take up the edge of her cymar, and kisses it.)

JUAN.

How is it with you, lady? You look sad.

FEDALMA.

Oh, I am sick at heart. The eye of day,
The insistent summer sun, seems pitiless,
Shining in all the barren crevices
Of weary life, leaving no shade, no dark,
Where I may dream that hidden waters lie;
As pitiless as to some shipwrecked man,
Who gazing from his narrow shoal of sand
On the wide unspecked round of blue and blue
Sees that full light is errorless despair.
The insects' hum that slurs the silent dark
Startles and seems to cheat me, as the tread
Of coming footsteps cheats the midnight watcher
Who holds her heart and waits to hear them pause,
And hears them never pause, but pass and die.
Music sweeps by me as a messenger
Carrying a message that is not for me.
The very sameness of the hills and sky
Is obduracy, and the lingering hours
Wait round me dumbly, like superfluous slaves,
Of whom I want nought but the secret news
They are forbid to tell. And, Juan, you —
You, too, are cruel — would be over-wise
In judging your friend's needs, and choose to hide
Something I crave to know.

JUAN.

I, lady?

FEDALMA.

You.

JUAN.

I never had the virtue to hide aught,
Save what a man is whipped for publishing.
I'm no more reticent than the voluble air —
Dote on disclosure — never could contain
The latter half of all my sentences,
But for the need to utter the beginning.
My lust to tell is so importunate
That it abridges every other vice,
And makes me temperate for want of time.
I dull sensation in the haste to say
'T is this or that, and choke report with surmise.
Judge, then, dear lady, if I could be mute
When but a glance of yours had bid me speak.

FEDALMA.

Nay, sing such falsities ! — you mock me worse
By speech that gravely seems to ask belief.
You are but babbling in a part you play
To please my father. Oh, 't is well meant, say you —
Pity for woman's weakness. Take my thanks.

JUAN.

Thanks angrily bestowed are red-hot coin
Burning your servant's palm.

FEDALMA.

Deny it not,
You know how many leagues this camp of ours
Lies from Bedmár — what mountains lie between —
Could tell me if you would about the Duke —
That he is comforted, sees how he gains
Losing the Zíncala, finds now how slight
The thread Fedalma made in that rich web,
A Spanish noble's life. No, that is false!
He never would think lightly of our love.
Some evil has befallen him — he's slain —

Has sought for danger and has beckoned death
 Because I made all life seem treachery.
 Tell me the worst — be merciful — no worst,
 Against the hideous painting of my fear,
 Would not show like a better.

JUAN.

 If I speak,
 Will you believe your slave ? For truth is scant;
 And where the appetite is still to hear
 And not believe, falsehood would stint it less.
 How say you ? Does your hunger's fancy choose
 The meagre fact ?

FEDALMA (*seating herself on the ground*).

 Yes, yes, the truth, dear Juan.
 Sit now, and tell me all.

JUAN.

 That all is nought.
 I can unleash my fancy if you wish
 And hunt for phantoms : shoot an airy guess
 And bring down airy likelihood — some lie
 Masked cunningly to look like royal truth
 And cheat the shooter, while King Fact goes free ;
 Or else some image of reality
 That doubt will handle and reject as false.
 As for conjecture — I can thread the sky
 Like any swallow, but, if you insist
 On knowledge that would guide a pair of feet
 Right to Bedmar, across the Moorish bounds,
 A mule that dreams of stumbling over stones
 Is better stored.

FEDALMA.

 And you have gathered nought
 About the border wars ? No news, no hint
 Of any rumors that concern the Duke...
 Rumors kept from me by my father ?

JUAN.

None.

Your father trusts no secret to the echoes.
Of late his movements have been hid from all
Save those few hundred chosen Gypsy breasts
He carries with him. Think you he's a man
To let his projects slip from out his belt,
Then whisper him who haps to find them strayed
To be so kind as keep his counsel well?
Why, if he found me knowing aught too much,
He would straight gag or strangle me, and say,
"Poor hound! it was a pity that his bark
Could chance to mar my plans: he loved my daughter
The idle hound had nought to do but love,
So followed to the battle and got crushed."

FEDALMA (*holding out her hand, which JUAN kisses*).

Good Juan, I could have no nobler friend.
You'd ope your veins and let your life-blood out
To save another's pain, yet hide the deed
With jesting — say, 't was merest accident,
A sportive scratch that went by chance too deep —
And die content with men's slight thoughts of you,
Finding your glory in another's joy.

JUAN.

Dub not my likings virtues, lest they get
A drug-like taste, and breed a nausea.
Honey's not sweet, commended as cathartic.
Such names are parchment labels upon gems
Hiding their color. What is lovely seen
Priced in a tarif? — lapis lazuli,
Such bulk, so many drachmas: amethysts
Quoted at so much; sapphires higher still.
The stone like solid heaven in its blueness
Is what I care for, not its name or price.
So, if I live or die to serve my friend,
'Tis for my love — 't is for my friend alone,
And not for any rate that friendship bears
In heaven or on earth. Nay, I romance —
I talk of Roland and the ancient peers.

In me 't is hardly friendship, only lack
Of a substantial self that holds a weight;
So I kiss larger things and roll with them.

FEDALMA.

Oh, you will never hide your soul from me;
I've seen the jewel's flash, and know 't is there,
Muffle it as you will. That foam-like talk
Will not wash out a fear which blots the good
Your presence brings me. Oft I'm pierced afresh
Through all the pressure of my selfish griefs
By thought of you. It was a rash resolve
Made you disclose yourself when you kept watch
About the terrace wall: — your pity leaped,
Seeing alone my ills and not your loss,
Self-doomed to exile. Juan, you must repent.
'T is not in nature that resolve, which feeds
On strenuous actions, should not pine and die
In these long days of empty listlessness.

JUAN.

Repent? Not I. Repentance is the weight
Of indigested meals ta'en yesterday.
'T is for large animals that gorge on prey,
Not for a honey-sipping butterfly.
I am a thing of rhythm and redondillas —
The momentary rainbow on the spray
Made by the thundering torrent of men's lives:
No matter whether I am here or there;
I still catch sunbeams. And in Africa,
Where melons and all fruits, they say, grow large,
Fables are real, and the apes polite,
A poet, too, may prosper past belief:
I shall grow epic, like the Florentine,
And sing the founding of our infant state,
Sing the new Gypsy Carthage.

FEDALMA.

Africa!

Would we were there! Under another heaven,
In lands where neither love nor memory
Can plant a selfish hope — in lands so far
I should not seem to see the outstretched arms

That seek me, or to hear the voice that calls.
 I should feel distance only and despair;
 So rest for ever from the thought of bliss,
 And wear my weight of life's great chain unstruggling.
 Juan, if I could know he would forget —
 Nay, not forget, forgive me — be content
 That I forsook him for no joy, but sorrow,
 For sorrow chosen rather than a joy
 That destiny made base! Then he would taste
 No bitterness in sweet, sad memory,
 And I should live unblemished in his thought,
 Hallowed like her who dies an unwed bride.
 Our words have wings, but fly not where we would.
 Could mine but reach him, Juan!

JUAN.

Speak the wish —
 My feet have wings — I'll be your Mercury.
 I fear no shadowed perils by the way.
 No man will wear the sharpness of his sword
 On me. Nay, I'm a herald of the Muse,
 Sacred for Moors and Spaniards. I will go —
 Will fetch you tidings for an amulet.
 But stretch not hope too strongly towards that mark
 As issue of my wandering. Given, I cross
 Safely the Moorish border, reach Bedniár:
 Fresh counsels may prevail there, and the Duke
 Being absent in the field, I may be trapped.
 Men who are sour at missing larger game
 May wing a chattering sparrow for revenge.
 It is a chance no further worth the note
 Than as a warning, lest you feared worse ill
 If my return were stayed. I might be caged;
 They would not harm me else. Untimely death,
 The red auxiliary of the skeleton,
 Has too much work on hand to think of me;
 Or, if he cares to slay me, I shall fall
 Choked with a grape-stone for economy.
 The likelier chance is that I go and come,
 Bringing you comfort back.

FEDALMA (*starts from her seat and walks to a little distance, standing a few moments with her back towards JUAN, then she turns round quickly, and goes towards him*).

No, Juan, no !
 Those yearning words came from a soul infirm,
 Crying and struggling at the pain of bonds
 Which yet it would not loosen. He knows all —
 All that he needs to know : I said farewell :
 I stepped across the cracking earth and knew
 'T would yawn behind me. I must walk right on.
 No, I will not win aught by risking you :
 That risk would poison my poor hope. Besides
 'T were treachery in me : my father wills
 That we — all here — should rest within this camp.
 If I can never live, like him, on faith
 In glorious morrows, I am resolute.
 While he treads painfully with stillest step
 And beady brow, pressed 'neath the weight of arms,
 Shall I, to ease my fevered restlessness,
 Raise peevish moans, shattering that fragile silence ?
 No ! On the close-thronged spaces of the earth
 A battle rages : Fate has carried me
 'Mid the thick arrows : I will keep my stand —
 Not shrink and let the shaft pass by my breast
 To pierce another. Oh, 't is written large
 The thing I have to do. But you, dear Juan,
 Renounce, endure, are brave, unurged by aught
 Save the sweet overflow of your good will.
(She seats herself again.)

JUAN.

Nay, I endure nought worse than napping sheep
 When nimble birds uproot a fleecy lock
 To line their nest with. See ! your bondsman, Queen,
 The minstrel of your court, is featherless ;
 Deforms your presence by a moulting garb ;
 Shows like a roadside bush culled of its buds.
 Yet, if your graciousness will not disdain
 A poor plucked songster — shall he sing to you ?
 Some lay of afternoons — some ballad strain
 Of those who ached once but are sleeping now
 Under the sun-warmed flowers ? 'T will cheat the time.

FEDALMA.

Thanks, Juan — later, when this hour is passed.
 My soul is clogged with self ; it could not float
 On with the pleasing sadness of your song.

Leave me in this green spot, but come again, —
Come with the lengthening shadows.

JUAN.

Will go to chase the robbers. Then your slave
Queen, farewell!

FEDALMA.

Best friend, my well-spring in the wilderness!

[While Juan sped along the stream, there came
From the dark tents a ringing joyous shout
That thrilled Fedalma with a summons grave
Yet welcome, too. Straightway she rose and stood,
All languor banished, with a soul suspense,
Like one who waits high presence, listening.
Was it a message, or her father's self
That made the camp so glad?

It was himself!
She saw him now advancing, girt with arms
That seemed like idle trophies hung for show
Beside the weight and fire of living strength
That made his frame. He glanced with absent triumph,
As one who conquers in some field afar
And bears off unseen spoil. But nearing her,
His terrible eyes intense sent forth new rays —
A sudden sunshine where the lightning was
'Twixt meeting dark. All tenderly he laid
His hand upon her shoulder; tenderly
His kiss upon her brow.]

ZARCA.

My royal daughter!

FEDALMA.

Father, I joy to see your safe return.

ZARCA.

Nay, but I stole the time, as hungry men
Steal from the morrow's meal, made a forced march,
Left Hassan as my watchdog, all to see

My daughter, and to feed her famished hope
With news of promise.

FEDALMA.

Is the task achieved
That was to be the herald of our flight?

ZARCA.

Not outwardly, but to my inward vision
Things are achieved when they are well begun.
The perfect archer calls the deer his own
While yet the shaft is whistling. His keen eye
Never sees failure, sees the mark alone.
You have heard nought, then — had no messenger?

FEDALMA.

I, father? no: each quiet day has fled
Like the same moth, returning with slow wing,
And pausing in the sunshine.

ZARCA.

It is well.
You shall not long count days in weariness.
Ere the full moon has waned again to new,
We shall reach Almería: Berber ships
Will take us for their freight, and we shall go
With plenteous spoil, not stolen, bravely won
By service done on Spaniards. Do you shrink?
Are you aught less than a true Zíncala?

FEDALMA.

No; but I am more. The Spaniards fostered me.

ZARCA.

They stole you first, and reared you for the flames.
I found you, rescued you, that you might live
A Zíncala's life; I saved you from their doom.
Your bridal bed had been the rack.

FEDALMA (*in a low tone*).

They meant —

To seize me ? — ere he came ?

ZARCA.

Yes, I know all.

They found your chamber empty.

FEDALMA (*eagerly*).

Then you know —

(*checking herself*.)

Father, my soul would be less laggard, fed
With fuller trust.

ZARCA.

My daughter, I must keep
The Arab's secret. Arabs are our friends,
Grappling for life with Christians who lay waste
Granáda's valleys, and with devilish hoofs
Trauple the young green corn, with devilish play
Fell blossomed trees, and tear up well-pruned vines:
Cruel as tigers to the vanquished brave,
They wring out gold by oaths they mean to break;
Take pay for pity and are pitiless;
Then tinkle bells above the desolate earth
And praise their monstrous gods, supposed to love
The flattery of liars. I will strike
The full-gorged dragon. You, my child, must watch
The battle with a heart, not fluttering
But duteous, firm-weighted by resolve,
Choosing between two lives, like her who holds
A dagger which must pierce one of two breasts,
And 'hem her father's. You divine —
I speak not closely, but in parables;
Put one for many.

FEDALMA (*collecting herself and looking firmly at ZARCA*).

Then it is your will

That I ask nothing ?

ZARCA.

You shall know enough
 To trace the sequence of the seed and flower.
 El Zagal trusts me, rates my counsel high :
 He, knowing I have won a grant of lands
 Within the Berber's realm, wills me to be
 The tongue of his good cause in Africa,
 So gives us furtherance in our pilgrimage
 For service hoped, as well as service done
 In that great feat of which I am the eye,
 And my five hundred Gypsies the best arm.
 More, I am charged by other noble Moors
 With messages of weight to Telemsán.
 Ha, your eye flashes. Are you glad ?

FEDALMA.

Yes, glad

That men can greatly trust a Zíncalo.

ZARCA.

Why, fighting for dear life men choose their swords
 For cutting only, not for ornament.
 What nought but Nature gives, man takes perforce
 Where she bestows it, though in vilest place.
 Can he compress invention out of pride.
 Make heirship do the work of muscle, sail
 Towards great discoveries with a pedigree ?
 Sick men ask cures, and Nature serves not hers
 Daintily as a feast. A blacksmith once
 Founded a dynasty, and raised on high
 The leathern apron over armies spread
 Between the mountains like a lake of steel.

FEDALMA (*bitterly*).

To be contemned, then, is fair augury.
 That pledge of future good at least is ours.

ZARCA.

Let men contemn us : 't is such blind contempt
 That leaves the wingéd broods to thrive in warmth

Unheeded, till they fill the air like storms.
 So we shall thrive — still darkly shall draw force
 Into a new and multitudinous life
 That likeness fashions to community,
 Mother divine of customs, faith and laws.
 'T is ripeness, 't is fame's zenith that kills hope.
 Huge oaks are dying, forests yet to come
 Lie in the twigs and rotten-seeming seeds.

FEDALMA.

And our wild Zíncali ? 'Neath their rough husk
 Can you discern such seed ? You said our band
 Was the best arm of some hard enterprise ;
 They give out sparks of virtue, then, and show
 There's metal in their earth ?

ZARCA.

Ay, metal fine

In my brave Gypsies. Not the lithest Moor
 Has lither limbs for scaling, keener eye
 To mark the meaning of the furthest speck
 That tells of change ; and they are disciplined
 By faith in me, to such obedience
 As needs no spy. My scalers and my scouts
 Are to the Moorish force they're leagued withal
 As bow-string to the bow ; while I their chief
 Command the enterprise and guide the will
 Of Moorish captains, as the pilot guides
 With eye-instructed hand the passive helm.
 For high device is still the highest force,
 And he who holds the secret of the wheel
 May make the rivers do what work he would.
 With thoughts impalpable we clutch men's souls,
 Weaken the joints of armies, make them fly
 Like dust and leaves before the viewless wind.
 Tell me what's mirrored in the tiger's heart,
 I'll rule that too.

FEDALMA (*wrought to a glow of admiration*).

O my imperial father !

'T is where there breathes a mighty soul like yours
 That men's contempt is of good augury.

ZARCA (seizing both FEDALMA's hands, and looking at her searchingly).

And you, my daughter, what are you — if not
The Zíncalo's child? Say, does not his great hope
Thrill in your veins like shouts of victory?
'T is a vile life that like a garden pool
Lies stagnant in the round of personal loves;
That has no ear save for the tickling lute
Set to small measures — deaf to all the beats
Of that large music rolling o'er the world:
A miserable, petty, low-roofed life,
That knows the mighty orbits of the skies
Through nought save light or dark in its own cabin.
The very brutes will feel the force of kind
And move together, gathering a new soul —
The soul of multitudes. Say now, my child,
You will not falter, not look back and long
For unfledged ease in some soft alien nest.
The crane with outspread wing that heads the file
Pauses not, feels no backward impulses:
Behind it summer was, and is no more;
Before it lies the summer it will reach
Or perish in mid-ocean. You no less
Must feel the force sublime of growing life.
New thoughts are urgent as the growth of wings;
The widening vision is imperious
As higher members bursting the worm's sheath.
You cannot grovel in the worm's delights:
You must take wingéd pleasures, wingéd pains.
Are you not steadfast? Will you live or die
For aught below your royal heritage?
To him who holds the flickering brief torch
That lights a beacon for the perishing,
Aught else is crime. Would you let drop the torch?

FEDALMA.

Father, my soul is weak, the mist of tears
Still rises to my eyes, and hides the goal
Which to your undimmed sight is fixed and clear.
But if I cannot plant resolve on hope,
It will stand firm on certainty of woe.

I choose the ill that is most like to end
 With my poor being. Hopes have precarious life.
 They are oft blighted, withered, snapped sheer off
 In vigorous growth and turned to rottenness.
 But faithfulness can feed on suffering,
 And knows no disappointment. Trust in me!
 If it were needed, this poor trembling hand
 Should grasp the torch — strive not to let it fall
 Though it were burning down close to my flesh,
 No beacon lighted yet: through the damp dark
 I should still hear the cry of gasping swimmers.
 Father, I will be true!

ZARCA.

I trust that word.
 And, for your sadness — you are young — the bruise
 Will leave no mark. The worst of misery
 Is when a nature framed for noblest things
 Condemns itself in youth to petty joys,
 And, sore athirst for air, breathes scanty life
 Gasping from out the shallows. You are saved
 From such poor doubleness. The life we choose
 Breathes high, and sees a full-arched firmament.
 Our deeds shall speak like rock-hewn messages,
 Teaching great purpose to the distant time.
 Now I must hasten back. I shall but speak
 To Nadar of the order he must keep
 In setting watch and victualling. The stars
 And the young moon must see me at my post.
 Nay, rest you here. Farewell, my younger self —
 Strong-hearted daughter! Shall I live in you
 When the earth covers me?

FEDALMA.

My father, death
 Should give your will divineness, make it strong
 With the beseechings of a mighty soul
 That left its work unfinished. Kiss me now:
 (They embrace, and she adds tremulously
 they part.)
 And when you see fair hair, be pitiful.

[Exit ZARCA]

(FEDALMA seats herself on the bank, leans her head forward, and covers her face with her drapery. While she is seated thus, HINDA comes from the bank, with a branch of musk roses in her hand. Seeing FEDALMA with head bent and covered, she pauses, and begins to move on tiptoe.)

HINDA.

Our Queen! Can she be crying? There she sits
As I did every day when my dog Saad
Sickened and yelled, and seemed to yell so loud
After we buried him, I oped his grave.

(She comes forward on tiptoe, kneels at FEDALMA's feet, and embraces them. FEDALMA uncovers her head.)

FEDALMA.

Hinda! what is it?

HINDA.

Queen, a branch of roses
So sweet you'll love to smell them. 'T was the last.
I climbed the bank to get it before Tralla.
And slipped and scratched my arm. But I don't mind.
You love the roses — so do I. I wish
The sky would rain down roses, as they rain
From off the shaken bush. Why will it not?
Then all the valley would be pink and white
And soft to tread on. They would fall as light
As feathers, smelling sweet; and it would be
Like sleeping and yet waking, all at once!
Over the sea, Queen, where we soon shall go,
Will it rain roses?

FEDALMA.

No, my prattler, no!
It never will rain roses: when we want
To have more roses we must plant more trees.
But you want nothing, little one — the world
Just suits you as it suits the tawny squirrels.
Come, you want nothing.

HINDA.

Yes, I want more berries —
Red ones — to wind about my neck and arms
When I am married — on my ankles too
I want to wind red berries, and on my head.

FEDALMA.

Who is it you are fond of? Tell me, now.

HINDA.

O Queen, you know! It could be no one else
But Ismaël. He catches all the birds,
Knows where the speckled fish are, scales the rocks,
And sings and dances with me when I like.
How should I marry and not marry him?

FEDALMA.

Should you have loved him, had he been a Moor,
Or white Castilian?

HINDA (*starting to her feet, then kneeling again*).

Are you angry, Queen?
Say why you will think shame of your poor Hinda?
She'd sooner be a rat and hang on thorns
To parch until the wind had scattered her,
Than be an outcast, spit at by her tribe.

FEDALMA.

I think no evil — am not angry, child.
But would you part from Ismaël? leave him now
If your chief bade you — said it was for good
To all your tribe that you must part from him?

HINDA (*giving a sharp cry*).

Ah, will he say so?

FEDALMA (*almost fierce in her earnestness*).

Nay, child, answer me.
Could you leave Ismaël? get into a boat
And see the waters widen 'twixt you two
Till all was water and you saw him not,
And knew that you would never see him more?
If 't was your chief's command, and if he said
Your tribe would all be slaughtered, die of plague,
Of famine — madly drink each other's blood . . .

HINDA (*trembling*).

O Queen, if it is so, tell Ismaël.

FEDALMA.

You would obey, then? part from him for ever?

HINDA.

How could we live else? With our brethren lost? —
No marriage feast? The day would turn to dark.
A Zíncala cannot live without her tribe.
I must obey! Poor Ismaël — poor Hinda!
But will it ever be so cold and dark?
Oh, I would sit upon the rocks and cry,
And cry so long that I could cry no more:
Then I should go to sleep.

FEDALMA.

No, Hinda, no!
Thou never shalt be called to part from him.
I will have berries for thee, red and black,
And I will be so glad to see thee glad,
That earth will seem to hold enough of joy
To outweigh all the pangs of those who part.
Be comforted, bright eyes. See, I will tie
These roses in a crown, for thee to wear.

HINDA (*clapping her hands, while FEDALMA puts the roses on her head*).

Oh, I'm as glad as many little foxes —
I will find Ismaël, and tell him all.

(*She runs off*.)

FEDALMA (*alone*).

She has the strength I lack. Within her world
The dial has not stirred since first she woke :
No changing light has made the shadows die,
And taught her trusting soul sad difference.
For her, good, right, and law are all summed up
In what is possible : life is one web
Where love, joy, kindred, and obedience
Lie fast and even, in one warp and woof
With thirst and drinking, hunger, food, and sleep.
She knows no struggles, sees no double path :
Her fate is freedom, for her will is one
With her own people's law, the only law
She ever knew. For me — I have fire within,
But on my will there falls the chilling snow
Of thoughts that come as subtly as soft flakes,
Yet press at last with hard and icy weight.
I could be firm, could give myself the wrench
And walk erect, hiding my life-long wound,
If I but saw the fruit of all my pain
With that strong vision which commands the soul,
And makes great awe the monarch of desire.
But now I totter, seeing no far goal :
I tread the rocky pass, and pause and grasp,
Guided by flashes. When my father comes,
And breathes into my soul his generous hope —
By his own greatness making life seem great,
As the clear heavens bring sublimity,
And show earth larger, spanned by that blue vast —
Resolve is strong : I can embrace my sorrow,
Nor nicely weigh the fruit ; possessed with need
Solely to do the noblest, though it failed —
Though lava streamed upon my breathing deed
And buried it in night and barrenness.
But soon the glow dies out, the trumpet strain

That vibrated as strength through all my limbs
Is heard no longer ; over the wide scene
There 's nought but chill gray silence, or the hum
And fitful discord of a vulgar world.
Then I sink helpless — sink into the arms
Of all sweet memories, and dream of bliss :
See looks that penetrate like tones ; hear tones
That flash looks with them. Even now I feel
Soft airs enwrap me, as if yearning rays
Of some far presence touched me with their warmth
And brought a tender murmuring . . .

[While she mused,

A figure came from out the olive trees
That bent close-whispering 'twixt the parted hills
Beyond the crescent of thick cactus : paused
At sight of her ; then slowly forward moved
With careful steps, and gently said, " FEDALMA ! "
Fearing lest fancy had enslaved her sense,
She quivered, rose, but turned not. Soon again :
" FEDALMA, it is SILVA ! " Then she turned.
He, with bared head and arms entreating, beamed
Like morning on her. Vision held her still
One moment, then with gliding motion swift,
Inevitable as the melting stream's,
She found her rest within his circling arms.]

FEDALMA.

O love, you are living, and believe in me !

DON SILVA.

Once more we are together. Wishing dies —
Stified with bliss.

FEDALMA.

You did not hate me, then —
Think me an ingrate — think my love was small
That I forsook you ?

DON SILVA.

Dear, I trusted you
As holy men trust God. You could do nought
That was not pure and loving — though the deed
Might pierce me unto death. You had less trust,
Since you suspected mine. 'T was wicked doubt.

FEDALMA.

Nay, when I saw you hating me, the fault
Seemed in my lot — my bitter birthright — hers
On whom you lavished all your wealth of love
As price of nought but sorrow. Then I said,
" 'T is better so. He will be happier! "
But soon that thought, struggling to be a hope,
Would end in tears.

DON SILVA.

It was a cruel thought.
Happier! True misery is not begun
Until I cease to love thee.

FEDALMA.

Silva!

DON SILVA.

Mine!

(They stand a moment or two in silence)

FEDALMA.

I thought I had so much to tell you, love —
Long eloquent stories — how it all befell —
The solemn message, calling me away
To awful spousals, where my own dead joy,
A conscious ghost, looked on and saw me wed.

DON SILVA.

Oh, that grave speech would cumber our quick souls
Like bells that waste the moments with their loudness.

FEDALMA.

And if it all were said, 't would end in this,
That I still loved you when I fled away.
'T is no more wisdom than the little birds
Make known by their soft twitter when they feel
Each other's heart beat.

DON SILVA.

All the deepest things
We now say with our eyes and meeting pulse:
Our voices need but prattle.

FEDALMA.

I forget
All the drear days of thirst in this one draught.
(*Again they are silent for a few moments.*)
But tell me how you came? Where are your guards?
Is there no risk? And now I look at you,
This garb is strange

DON SILVA.

I came alone.

FEDALMA.

Alone?

DON SILVA.

Yes — fled in secret. There was no way else
To find you safely.

FEDALMA (*letting one hand fall and moving a little
from him with a look of sudden terror, while he
clasps her more firmly by the other arm*).

Silva!

DON SILVA.

It is nought.
Enough that I am here. Now we will cling.

What power shall hinder us? You left me once
 To set your father free. That task is done,
 And you are mine again. I have braved all
 That I might find you, see your father, win
 His furtherance in bearing you away
 To some safe refuge. Are we not betrothed?

FEDALMA.

Oh, I am trembling 'neath the rush of thoughts
 That come like griefs at morning — look at me
 With awful faces, from the vanishing haze
 That momentarily had hidden them.

DON SILVA.

What thoughts?

FEDALMA.

Forgotten burials. There lies a grave
 Between this visionary present and the past.
 Our joy is dead, and only smiles on us
 A loving shade from out the place of tombs.

DON SILVA.

Your love is faint, else aught that parted us
 Would seem but superstition. Love supreme
 Defies dream-terrors — risks avenging fires.
 I have risked all things. But your love is faint.

FEDALMA (*retreating a little, but keeping his hand*).

Silva, if now between us came a sword,
 Severed my arm, and left our two hands clasped,
 This poor maimed arm would feel the clasp till death.
 What parts us is a sword

(*ZARCA has been advancing in the background. He has drawn his sword, and now thrusts the naked blade between them. DON SILVA lets go FEDALMA'S hand, and grasps his sword. FEDALMA, startled at first, stands firmly, as if prepared to interpose between her Father and the Duke*).

ZARCA.

Ay, 't is a sword
That parts the Spaniard and the Zíncala :
A sword that was baptized in Christian blood,
When once a band, cloaking with Spanish law
Their brutal rapine, would have butchered us,
And outraged then our women.

(Resting the point of his sword on the ground.)

My lord Duke,
I was a guest within your fortress once
Against my will; had entertainment too —
Much like a galley-slave's. Pray, have you sought
The Zíncalo's camp, to find a fit return
For that Castilian courtesy ? or rather
To make amends for all our prisoned toil
By free bestowal of your presence here ?

DON SILVA.

Chief, I have brought no scorn to meet your scorn.
I came because love urged me — that deep love
I bear to her whom you call daughter — her
Whom I reclaim as my betrothed bride.

ZARCA.

Doubtless you bring for final argument
Your men-at-arms who will escort your bride ?

DON SILVA.

I came alone. The only force I bring
Is tenderness. Nay, I will trust besides
In all the pleadings of a father's care
To wed his daughter as her nurture bids.
And for your tribe — whatever purposed good
Your thoughts may cherish, I will make secure
With the strong surety of a noble's power:
My wealth shall be your treasury.

ZARCA (*with irony*).

My thanks !
To me you offer liberal price ; for her

Your love's beseeching will be force supreme.
 She will go with you as a willing slave,
 Will give a word of parting to her father,
 Wave farewells to her tribe, then turn and say,
 "Now, my lord, I am nothing but your bride;
 I am quite culled, have neither root nor trunk,
 Now wear me with your plume!"

DON SILVA.

Yours is the wrong
 Feigning in me one thought of her below
 The highest homage. I would make my rank
 The pedestal of her worth; a noble's sword,
 A noble's honor, her defence; his love
 The life-long sanctuary of her womanhood.

ZARCA.

I tell you, were you King of Aragon,
 And won my daughter's hand, your higher rank
 Would blacken her dishonor. 'T were excuse
 If you were beggared, homeless, spit upon,
 And so made even with her people's lot;
 For then she would be lured by want, not wealth,
 To be a wife amongst an alien race
 To whom her tribe owes curses.

DON SILVA.

Such blind hate
 Is fit for beasts of prey, but not for men.
 My hostile acts against you, should but count
 As ignorant strokes against a friend unknown;
 And for the wrongs inflicted on your tribe
 By Spanish edicts or the cruelty
 Of Spanish vassals, am I criminal?
 Love comes to cancel all ancestral hate,
 Subdues all heritage, proves that in mankind
 Union is deeper than division.

ZARCA.

Ay,
 Such love is common: I have seen it oft —

Seen many women rend the sacred ties
 That bind them in high fellowship with men,
 Making them mothers of a people's virtue :
 Seen them so levelled to a handsome steed
 That yesterday was Moorish property,
 To-day is Christian — wears new-fashioned gear,
 Neighs to new feeders, and will prance alike
 Under all banners, so the banner be
 A master's who caresses. Such light change
 You call conversion ; but we Zíncali call
 Conversion infamy. Our people's faith
 Is faithfulness ; not the rote-learned belief
 That we are heaven's highest favorites,
 But the resolve that being most forsaken
 Among the sons of men, we will be true
 Each to the other, and our common lot.
 You Christians burn men for their heresy :
 Our vilest heretic is that Zíncala
 Who, choosing ease, forsakes her people's woes.
 The dowry of my daughter is to be
 Chief woman of her tribe, and rescue it.
 A bride with such a dowry has no match
 Among the subjects of that Catholic Queen
 Who would have Gypsies swept into the sea
 Or else would have them gibbeted.

DON SILVA.

And you,
 Fedalma's father — you who claim the dues
 Of fatherhood — will offer up her youth
 To mere grim idols of your phantasy !
 Worse than all Pagans, with no oracle
 To bid you murder, no sure good to win,
 Will sacrifice your daughter — to no god,
 But to a ravenous fire within your soul,
 Mad hopes, blind hate, that like possessing fiends
 Shriek at a name ! This sweetest virgin, reared
 As garden flowers, to give the sordid world
 Glimpses of perfectness, you snatch and thrust
 On dreary wilds ; in visions mad, proclaim
 Semiramis of Gypsy wanderers ;
 Doom, with a broken arrow in her heart,
 To wait for death 'mid squalid savages :
 For what ? You would be saviour of your tribe ;

So said Fedalma's letter ; rather say,
 You have the will to save by ruling men,
 But first to rule ; and with that flinty will
 You cut your way, though the first cut you give
 Gash your child's bosom.

*(While DON SILVA has been speaking, with grow-
 ing passion, FEDALMA has placed herself between
 him and her father.)*

ZARCA (*with calm irony*).

You are loud, my lord !

You only are the reasonable man ;
 You have a heart, I none. Fedalma's good
 Is what you see, you care for ; while I seek
 No good, not even my own, urged on by nought
 But hellish hunger, which must still be fed
 Though in the feeding it I suffer throes.
 Fume at your own opinion as you will :
 I speak not now to you, but to my daughter.
 If she still calls it good to mate with you,
 To be a Spanish duchess, kneel at court,
 And hope her beauty is excuse to men
 When women whisper, " A mere Zincale !"
 If she still calls it good to take a lot
 That measures joy for her as she forgets
 Her kindred and her kindred's misery,
 Nor feels the softness of her downy couch
 Marred by remembrance that she once forsook
 The place that she was born to — let her go !
 If life for her still lies in alien love,
 That forces her to shut her soul from truth
 As men in shameful pleasures shut out day ;
 And death, for her, is to do rarest deeds,
 Which, even failing, leave new faith to men,
 The faith in human hearts — then, let her go !
 She is my only offspring ; in her veins
 She bears the blood her tribe has trusted in ;
 Her heritage is their obedience,
 And if I died, she might still lead them forth
 To plant the race her lover now reviles
 Where they may make a nation, and may rise
 To grander manhood than his race can show ;
 Then live a goddess, sanctifying oaths,

Enforcing right, and ruling consciences,
By law deep-graven in exalting deeds,
Through the long ages of her people's life.
If she can leave that lot for silken shame,
For kisses honeyed by oblivion —
The bliss of drunkards or the blank of fools —
Then let her go! You Spanish Catholics,
When you are cruel, base, and treacherous,
For ends not pious, tender gifts to God,
And for men's wounds offer much oil to churches:
We have no altars for such healing gifts
As soothe the heavens for outrage done on earth.
We have no priesthood and no creed to teach
That she — the Zíncala — who might save her race
And yet abandons it, may cleanse that blot,
And mend the curse her life has been to men,
By saving her own soul. Her one base choice
Is wrong unchangeable, is poison shed
Where men must drink, shed by her poisoning will.
Now choose, Fedalma!

[But her choice was made.
Slowly, while yet her father spoke, she moved
From where oblique with deprecating arms
She stood between the two who swayed her heart:
Slowly she moved to choose sublimer pain;
Yearning, yet shrinking; wrought upon by awe,
Her own brief life seeming a little isle
Remote through visions of a wider world
With fates close-crowded; firm to slay her joy
That cut her heart with smiles beneath the knife,
Like a sweet babe foredoomed by prophecy.
She stood apart, yet near her father: stood
Hand clutching hand, her limbs all tense with will
That strove 'gainst anguish, eyes that seemed a soul
Yearning in death towards him she loved and left.
He faced her, pale with passion and a will
Fierce to resist whatever might seem strong
And ask him to submit: he saw one end —
He must be conqueror; monarch of his lot
And not its tributary. But she spoke
Tenderly, pleadingly.]

FEDALMA.

My lord, farewell !
 'T was well we met once more ; now we must part.
 I think we had the chief of all love's joys
 Only in knowing that we loved each other.

DON SILVA.

I thought we loved with love that clings till death,
 Clings as brute mothers bleeding to their young,
 Still sheltering, clutching it, though it were dead ;
 Taking the death-wound sooner than divide.
 I thought we loved so.

FEDALMA.

Silva, it is fate.
 Great Fate has made me heiress of this woe.
 You must forgive Fedalma all her debt :
 She is quite beggared : if she gave herself,
 'T would be a self corrupt with stifled thoughts
 Of a forsaken better. It is truth
 My father speaks : the Spanish noble's wife
 Were a false Zíncala. No ! I will bear
 The heavy trust of my inheritance.
 See, 't was my people's life that throbbed in me :
 An unknown need stirred darkly in my soul,
 And made me restless even in my bliss.
 Oh, all my bliss was in our love ; but now
 I may not taste it : some deep energy
 Compels me to choose hunger. Dear, farewell !
 I must go with my people.

[She stretched forth
 Her tender hands, that oft had lain in his,
 The hands he knew so well, that sight of them
 Seemed like their touch. But he stood still as death ;
 Locked motionless by forces opposite :
 His frustrate hopes still battled with despair ;
 His will was prisoner to the double grasp
 Of rage and hesitancy. All the way
 Behind him he had trodden confident,

Ruling munificently in his thought
This Gypsy father. Now the father stood
Present and silent and unchangeable
As a celestial portent. Backward lay
The traversed road, the town's forsaken wall,
The risk, the daring; all around him now
Was obstacle, save where the rising flood
Of love close pressed by anguish of denial
Was sweeping him resistless; save where she
Gazing stretched forth her tender hands, that hurt
Like parting kisses. Then at last he spoke.]

DON SILVA.

No, I can never take those hands in mine
Then let them go for ever!

FEDALMA.

It must be.
We may not make this world a paradise
By walking it together hand in hand,
With eyes that meeting feed a double strength.
We must be only joined by pains divine
Of spirits blent in mutual memories.
Silva, our joy is dead.

DON SILVA.

But love still lives,
And has a safer guard in wretchedness.
Fedalma, women know no perfect love:
Loving the strong, they can forsake the strong;
Man clings because the being whom he loves
Is weak and needs him. I can never turn
And leave you to your difficult wandering;
Know that you tread the desert, bear the storm,
Shed tears, see terrors, faint with weariness,
Yet live away from you. I should feel nought
But your imagined pains: in my own steps
See your feet bleeding, taste your silent tears,
And feel no presence but your loneliness.
No, I will never leave you!

ZARCA.

My lord Duke,
 I have been patient, given room for speech,
 Bent not to move my daughter by command,
 Save that of her own faithfulness. But now,
 All further words are idle elegies
 Unfitting times of action. You are here
 With the safe-conduct of that trust you showed
 Coming unguarded to the Gypsy's camp.
 I would fain meet all trust with courtesy
 As well as honor; but my utmost power
 Is to afford you Gypsy guard to-night
 Within the tents that keep the northward lines,
 And for the morrow, escort on your way
 Back to the Moorish bounds.

DON SILVA.

What if my words
 Were meant for deeds, decisive as a leap
 Into the current? It is not my wont
 To utter hollow words, and speak resolves
 Like verses bandied in a madrigal.
 I spoke in-action first: I faced all risks
 To find Fedalma. Action speaks again
 When I, a Spanish noble, here declare
 That I abide with her, adopt her lot,
 Claiming alone fulfilment of her vows
 As my bethrothed wife.

FEDALMA (*wresting herself from him, and standing
 opposite with a look of terror*).

Nay, Silva, nay!
 You could not live so — spring from your high place...

DON SILVA.

Yes, I have said it. And you, chief, are bound
 By her strict vows, no stronger fealty
 Being left to cancel them.

ZARCA.

Strong words, my lord !
 Sounds fatal as the hammer-strokes that shape
 The glowing metal : they must shape your life.
 That you will claim my daughter is to say
 That you will leave your Spanish dignities,
 Your home, your wealth, your people, to become
 Wholly a Zúcalo : share our wanderings,
 And be a match meet for my daughter's dower
 By living for her tribe ; take the deep oath
 That binds you to us ; rest within our camp,
 Nevermore hold command of Spanish men,
 And keep my orders. See, my lord, you lock
 A many-winding chain — a heavy chain.

DON SILVA.

I have but one resolve : let the rest follow.
 What is my rank ? To-morrow it will be filled
 By one who eyes it like a carrion bird,
 Waiting for death. I shall be no more missed
 Than waves are missed that leaping on the rock
 Find there a bed and rest. Life's a vast sea
 That does its mighty errand without fail,
 Panting in unchanged strength though waves are changing.
 And I have said it : she shall be my people,
 And where she gives her life I will give mine.
 She shall not live alone, nor die alone.
 I will elect my deeds, and be the liege
 Not of my birth, but of that good alone
 I have discerned and chosen.

ZARCA.

Our poor faith
 Allows not rightful choice, save of the right
 Our birth has made for us. And you, my lord,
 Can still defer your choice, for some days' space.
 I march perforce to-night ; you, if you will,
 Under a Gypsy guard, can keep the heights
 With silent Time that slowly opes the scroll
 Of change inevitable — take no oath

Till my accomplished task leave me at large
To see you keep your purpose or renounce it.

DON SILVA.

Chief, do I hear amiss, or does your speech
Ring with a doubleness which I had held
Most alien to you? You would put me off,
And cloak evasion with allowance? No!
We will complete our pledges. I will take
That oath which binds not me alone, but you,
To join my life for ever with Fedalma's.

ZARCA.

I wrangle not — time presses. But the oath
Will leave you that same post upon the heights;
Pledged to remain there while my absence lasts.
You are agreed, my lord?

DON SILVA.

Agreed to all.

ZARCA.

Then I will give the summons to our camp.
We will adopt you as a brother now,
After our wanted fashion.

[Exit ZARCA

(SILVA takes FEDALMA's hands.)

FEDALMA.

O my lord!

I think the earth is trembling: nought is firm.
Some terror chills me with a shadowy grasp.
Am I about to wake, or do you breathe
Here in this valley? Did the outer air
Vibrate to fatal words, or did they shake
Only my dreaming soul? You — join — our tribe?

DON SILVA.

Is then your love too faint to raise belief
Up to that height?

FEDALMA.

Silva, had you but said
That you would die — that were an easy task
For you who oft have fronted death in war.
But so to live for me — you, used to rule —
You could not breathe the air my father breathes :
His presence is subjection. Go, my lord !
Fly, while there is yet time. Wait not to speak.
I will declare that I refused your love —
Would keep no vows to you . . .

DON SILVA.

It is too late.
You shall not thrust me back to seek a good
Apart from you. And what good ? Why, to face
Your absence — all the want that drove me forth —
To work the will of a more tyrannous friend
Than any uncowed father. Life at least
Gives choice of ills ; forces me to defy,
But shall not force me to a weak defiance.
The power that threatened you, to master me,
That scorches like a cave-hid dragon's breath,
Sure of its victory in spite of hate,
Is what I last will bend to — most defy.
Your father has a chieftain's ends, befitting
A soldier's eye and arm : were he as strong
As the Moors' prophet, yet the prophet too
Had younger captains of illustrious fame
Among the infidels. Let him command,
For when your father speaks, I shall hear you.
Life were no gain if you were lost to me :
I would go straight and seek the Moorish walls,
Challenge their bravest, and embrace swift death.
The Glorious Mother and her pitying Son
Are not Inquisitors, else their heaven were hell.
Perhaps they hate their cruel worshippers,
And let them feed on lies. I'll rather trust
They love you and have sent me to defend you.

FEDALMA.

I made my creed so, just to suit my mood
And smooth all hardship, till my father came
And taught my soul by ruling it. Since then
I cannot weave a dreaming happy creed
Where our love's happiness is not accursed.
My father shook my soul awake. And you —
The bonds Fedalma may not break for you,
I cannot joy that you should break for her.

DON SILVA.

Oh, Spanish men are not a petty band
Where one deserter makes a fatal breach.
Men, even nobles, are more plenteous
Than steeds and armor; and my weapons left
Will find new hands to wield them. Arrogance
Makes itself champion of mankind, and holds
God's purpose maimed for one hidalgo lost.

See where your father comes and brings a crowd
Of witnesses to hear my oath of love;
The low red sun glows on them like a fire.
This seems a valley in some strange new world,
Where we have found each other, my Fedalma.

BOOK IV.

Now twice the day had sunk from off the hills
While Silva kept his watch there, with the band
Of stalwart Gypsies. When the sun was high
He slept; then, waking, strained impatient eyes
To catch the promise of some moving form
That might be Juan — Juan who went and came
To soothe two hearts, and claimed nought for his own;
Friend more divine than all divinities,
Quenching his human thirst in others' joy.
All through the lingering nights and pale chill dawns
Juan had hovered near; with delicate sense,
As of some breath from every changing mood,
Had spoken or kept silence; touched his lute
To hint of melody, or poured brief strains
That seemed to make all sorrows natural,
Hardly worth weeping for, since life was short,
And shared by loving souls. Such pity welled
Within the minstrel's heart of light-tongued Juan
For this doomed man, who with dream-shrouded eyes
Had stepped into a torrent as a brook,
Thinking to ford it and return at will,
And now waked helpless in the eddying flood,
Hemmed by its raging hurry. Once that thought,
How easy wandering is, how hard and strict
The homeward way, had slipped from reverie
Into low-murmured song; — (brief Spanish song
'Scaped him as sighs escape from other men).

*Push off the boat,
Quit, quit the shore,
The stars will guide us back: —
O gathering cloud,
O wide, wide sea,
O waves that keep no track!*

*On through the pines !
 The pillared woods,
 Where silence breathes sweet breath :—
 O labyrinth,
 O sunless gloom.
 The other side of death !*

Such plaintive song had seemed to please the Duke —
 Had seemed to melt all voices of reproach
 To sympathetic sadness ; but his moods
 Had grown more fitful with the growing hours,
 And this soft murmur had the iterant voice
 Of heartless Echo, whom no pain can move
 To say aught else than we have said to her.
 He spoke, impatient : “ Juan, cease thy song.
 Our whimpering poesy and small-paced tunes
 Have no more utterance than the cricket’s chirp
 For souls that carry heaven and hell within.”
 Then Juan, lightly : “ True, my lord, I chirp
 For lack of soul ; some hungry poets chirp
 For lack of bread. ’T were wiser to sit down
 And count the star-seed, till I fell asleep
 With the cheap wine of pure stupidity.”
 And Silva, checked by courtesy : “ Nay, Juan,
 Were speech once good, thy song were best of speech.
 I meant, all life is but poor mockery :
 Action, place, power, the visible wide world
 Are tattered masquerading of this self,
 This pulse of conscious mystery : all change,
 Whether to high or low, is change of rags.
 But for her love, I would not take a good
 Save to burn out in battle, in a flame
 Of madness that would feel no mangled limbs,
 And die not knowing death, but passing straight
 — Well, well, to other flames — in purgatory.”
 Keen Juan’s ear caught the self-discontent
 That vibrated beneath the changing tones
 Of life-contemning scorn. Gently he said :
 “ But *with* her love, my lord, the world deserves
 A higher rate ; were it but masquerade,
 The rags were surely worth the wearing ? ” “ Yes.
 No misery shall force me to repent
 That I have loved her.”

So with wilful talk,
Fencing the wounded soul from beating winds
Of truth that came unasked, companionship
Made the hours lighter. And the Gypsy guard,
Trusting familiar Juan, were content,
At friendly hint from him, to still their songs
And busy jargon round the nightly fires.
Such sounds, the quick-conceiving poet knew
Would strike on Silva's agitated soul
Like mocking repetition of the oath
That bound him in strange clanship with the tribe
Of human panthers, flame-eyed, lithe-limbed, fierce,
Unrecking of time-woven subtleties
And high tribunals of a phantom-world.

But the third day, though Silva southward gazed
Till all the shadows slanted towards him, gazed
Till all the shadows died, no Juan came.
Now in his stead came loneliness, and Thought
Inexorable, fastening with firm chain
What is to what hath been. Now awful Night,
The prime ancestral mystery, came down
Past all the generations of the stars,
And visited his soul with touch more close
Than when he kept that younger, briefer watch
Under the church's roof beside his arms,
And won his knighthood.

Well, this solitude,
This company with the enduring universe,
Whose mighty silence carrying all the past
Absorbs our history as with a breath,
Should give him more assurance, make him strong
In all contempt of that poor circumstance
Called human life — customs and bonds and laws
Wherewith men make a better or a worse,
Like children playing on a barren mound
Feigning a thing to strive for or avoid.
Thus Silva argued with his many-voiced self,
Whose thwarted needs, like angry multitudes,
Lured from the home that nurtured them to strength,
Made loud insurgence. Thus he called on Thought,
On dexterous Thought, with its swift alchemy
To change all forms, dissolve all prejudice
Of man's long heritage, and yield him up

A crude fused world to fashion as he would.
Thought played him double; seemed to wear the yoke
Of sovereign passion in the noon-day height
Of passion's prevalence; but served anon
As tribune to the larger soul which brought
Loud-mingled cries from every human need
That ages had instructed into life.
He could not grasp Night's black blank mystery
And wear it for a spiritual garb
Creed-proof: he shuddered at its passionless touch.
On solitary souls, the universe
Looks down inhospitable; the human heart
Finds nowhere shelter but in human kind.
He yearned towards images that had breath in them,
That sprang warm palpitant with memories
From streets and altars, from ancestral homes,
Banners and trophies and the cherishing rays
Of shame and honor in the eyes of man.
These made the speech articulate of his soul,
That could not move to utterance of scorn
Save in words bred by fellowship; could not feel
Resolve of hardest constancy to love
The firmer for the sorrows of the loved,
Save by concurrent energies high-wrought
To sensibilities transcending sense
Through close community, and long-shared pains
Of far-off generations. All in vain
He sought the outlaw's strength, and made a right
Contemning that hereditary right
Which held dim habitations in his frame,
Mysterious haunts of echoes old and far,
The voice divine of human loyalty.
At home, among his people, he had played
In sceptic ease with saints and litanies,
And thunders of the Church that deadened fell
Through screens of priests plethoric. Awe, unscathed
By deeper trespass, slept without a dream.
But for such trespass as made outcasts, still
The ancient Furies lived with faces new
And lurked with lighter slumber than of old
O'er Catholic Spain, the land of sacred oaths
That might be broken.

Now the former life
Of close-linked fellowship, the life that made

His full-formed self, as the impregnate sap
 Of years successive frames the full-branched tree —
 Was present in one whole; and that great trust
 His deed had broken turned reproach on him
 From faces of all witnesses who heard
 His uttered pledges; saw him hold high place
 Centring reliance; use rich privilege
 That bound him like a victim-nourished god
 By tacit covenant to shield and bless;
 Assume the Cross and take his knightly oath
 Mature, deliberate: faces human all,
 And some divine as well as human: His
 Who hung supreme, the suffering Man divine
 Above the altar; Hers, the Mother pure
 Whose glance informed his masculine tenderness
 With deepest reverence; the Archangel armed,
 Trampling man's enemy: all heroic forms
 That fill the world of faith with voices, hearts,
 And high companionship, to Silva now
 Made but one inward and insistent world
 With faces of his peers, with court and hall
 And deference, and reverent vassalage,
 And filial pieties — one current strong,
 The warmly mingled life-blood of his mind,
 Sustaining him even when he idly played
 With rules, beliefs, charges, and ceremonies
 As arbitrary fooling. Such revenge
 Is wrought by the long travail of mankind
 On him who scorns it, and would shape his life
 Without obedience.

But his warrior's pride
 Would take no wounds save on the breast. He faced
 The fatal crowd: "I never shall repent!
 If I have sinned, my sin was made for me
 By men's perverseness. There's no blameless life
 Save for the passionless, no sanctities
 But have the self-same roof and props with crime,
 Or have their roots close interlaced with wrong.
 If I had loved her less, been more a craven,
 I had kept my place and won the easy praise
 Of a true Spanish noble. But I loved,
 And, loving, dared — not Death the warrior
 But Infamy that binds and strips, and holds
 The brand and lash. I have dared all for her.

She was my good — what other men call heaven,
 And for the sake of it bear penances;
 Nay, some of old were baited, tortured, flayed
 To win their heaven. Heaven was their good,
 She, mine. And I have braved for her all fires
 Certain or threatened; for I go away
 Beyond the reach of expiation — far away
 From sacramental blessing. Does God bless
 No outlaw? Shut his absolution fast
 In human breath? Is there no God for me
 Save him whose cross I have forsaken? — Well,
 I am for ever exiled — but with her!
 She is dragged out into the wilderness;
 I, with my love, will be her providence.
 I have a right to choose my good or ill,
 A right to damn myself! The ill is mine.
 I never will repent!" . . .

Thus Silva, inwardly debating, all his ear
 Turned into audience of a twofold mind;
 For even in tumult full-fraught consciousness
 Had plenteous being for a self aloof
 That gazed and listened, like a soul in dreams . . .
 Weaving the wondrous tale it marvels at.
 But oft the conflict slackened, oft strong Love
 With tidal energy returning laid
 All other restlessness: Fedalma came,
 And with her visionary presence brought
 What seemed a waking in the warm spring morn.
 He still was pacing on the stony earth
 Under the deepening night; the fresh-lit fires
 Were flickering on dark forms and eyes that met
 His forward and his backward tread; but she,
 She was within him, making his whole self
 Mere correspondence with her image: sense,
 In all its deep recesses where it keeps
 The mystic stores of ecstasy, was turned
 To memory that killed the hour, like wine.
 Then Silva said, "She, by herself, is life.
 What was my joy before I loved her — what
 Shall heaven lure us with, love being lost?" —
 For he was young.

But now around the fires
 The Gypsy band felt freer; Juan's song
 Was no more there, nor Juan's friendly ways

For links of amity 'twixt their wild mood
 And this strange brother, this pale Spanish duke,
 Who with their Gypsy badge upon his breast
 Took readier place within their alien hearts
 As a marked captive, who would fain escape.
 And Nadar, who commanded them, had known
 The prison in Bedmár. So now, in talk
 Foreign to Spanish ears, they said their minds,
 Discussed their chief's intent, the lot marked out
 For this new brother. Would he wed their queen?
 And some denied, saying their queen would wed
 Only a Gypsy duke — one who would join
 Their bands in Telemsán. But others thought
 Young Hassan was to wed her; said their chief
 Would never trust this noble of Castile,
 Who in his very swearing was forsworn.
 And then one fell to chanting, in wild notes
 Recurrent like the moan of outshut winds,
 The adjuration they were wont to use
 To any Spaniard who would join their tribe:
 Words of plain Spanish, lately stirred anew
 And ready at new impulse. Soon the rest,
 Drawn to the stream of sound, made unison
 Higher and lower, till the tidal sweep
 Seemed to assail the Duke and close him round
 With force dæmonic. All debate till now
 Had wrestled with the urgency of that oath
 Already broken; now the newer oath
 Thrust its loud presence on him. He stood still,
 Close baited by loud-barking thoughts — fierce hounds
 Of that Supreme, the irreversible Past.

The ZINCALI sing.

*Brother, hear and take the curse,
 Curse of soul's and body's throes,
 If you hate not all our foes,
 Cling not fast to all our woes,
 Turn false Zincalo!*

*May you be accurst
 By hunger and by thirst
 By spikéd pangs,
 Starvation's fangs*

Clutching you alone
When none but peering vultures hear your moan.
Curst by burning hands,
Curst by aching brow,
When on sea-wide sands
Fever lays you low ;
By the maddened brain
When the running water glistens,
And the deaf ear listens, listens,
Prisoned fire within the vein,
On the tongue and on the lip
Not a sip
From the earth or skies ;
Hot the desert lies
Pressed into your anguish,
Narrowing earth and narrowing sky
Into lonely misery.
Lonely may you languish
Through the day and through the night,
Hate the darkness, hate the light,
Pray and find no ear,
Feel no brother near,
Till on death you cry,
Death who passes by,
And anew you groan,
Scaring the vultures all to leave you living lone :
Curst by soul's and body's throes
If you love the dark men's foes,
Cling not fast to all the dark men's woes,
Turn false Zíncalo !
Swear to hate the cruel cross,
The silver cross !
Glittering, laughing at the blood
Shed below it in a flood
When it glitters over Moorish porches ;
Laughing at the scent of flesh
When it glitters where the faggot scorches,
Burning life's mysterious mesh :
Blood of wandering Israël,
Blood of wandering Ismaël,
Blood, the drink of Christian scorn,
Blood of wanderers, sons of morn
Where the life of men began :
Swear to hate the cross ! —

*Sign of all the wanderers' foes,
 Sign of all the wanderers' woes —
 Else its curse light on you !
 Else the curse upon you light
 Of its sharp red-sworded might.
 May it lie a blood-red blight
 On all things within your sight :
 On the white haze of the morn,
 On the meadows and the corn,
 On the sun and on the moon,
 On the clearness of the noon,
 On the darkness of the night.
 May it fill your aching sight —
 Red-cross sword and sword blood-red —
 Till it press upon your head,
 Till it lie within your brain,
 Piercing sharp, a cross of pain,
 Till it lie upon your heart,
 Burning hot, a cross of fire,
 Till from sense in every part
 Pains have clustered like a stinging swarm
 In the cross's form,
 And you see nought but the cross of blood,
 And you feel nought but the cross of fire :
 Curs'd by all the cross's throes
 If you hate not all our foes,
 Cling not fast to all our woes,
 Turn false Zíncalo !*

A fierce delight was in the Gypsies' chant :
 They thought no more of Silva, only felt
 Like those broad-chested rovers of the night
 Who pour exuberant strength upon the air.
 To him it seemed as if the hellish rhythm,
 Revolving in long curves that slackened now,
 Now hurried, sweeping round again to slackness,
 Would cease no more. What use to raise his voice,
 Or grasp his weapon ? He was powerless now,
 With these new comrades of his future — he
 Who had been wont to have his wishes feared
 And guessed at as a hidden law for men.
 Even the passive silence of the night
 That left these howlers mastery, even the moon,
 Rising and staring with a helpless face,

Angered him. He was ready now to fly
At some loudthroat, and give the signal so
For butchery of himself.

But suddenly
The sounds that travelled towards no foreseen close
Were torn right off and fringed into the night;
Sharp Gypsy ears had caught the onward strain
Of kindred voices joining in the chant.
All started to their feet and mustered close,
Auguring long-awaited summons. It was come:
The summons to set forth and join their chief.
Fedalma had been called, and she was gone
Under safe escort, Juan following her:
The camp — the women, children, and old men —
Were moving slowly southward on the way
To Almería. Silva learned no more.
He marched perforce; what other goal was his
Than where Fedalma was? And so he marched
Through the dim passes and o'er rising hills,
Not knowing whither, till the morning came.

The Moorish hall in the castle at Bedmár. The morning twilight dimly shows stains of blood on the white marble floor; yet there has been a careful restoration of order among the sparse objects of furniture. Stretched on mats lie three corpses, the faces bare, the bodies covered with mantles. A little way off, with rolled matting for a pillow, lies ZARCA, sleeping. His chest and arms are bare; his weapons, turban, mail-shirt, and other upper garments lie on the floor beside him. In the outer gallery Zíncali are pacing, at intervals, past the arched openings.

ZARCA (half rising and resting his elbow on the pillow while he looks round).

The morning! I have slept for full three hours;
Slept without dreams, save of my daughter's face.
Its sadness waked me. Soon she will be here,
Soon must outlive the worst of all the pains
Bred by false nurture in an alien home —
As if a lion in fangless infancy
Learned love of creatures that with fatal growth
It scents as natural prey, and grasps and tears,
Yet with heart-hunger yearns for, missing them.

She is a lioness. And they — the race
 That robbed me of her — reared her to this pain.
He will be crushed and torn. There was no help.
 But she, my child, will bear it. For strong souls
 Live like fire-hearted suns to spend their strength
 In farthest striving action ; breathe more free
 In mighty anguish than in trivial ease.
 Her sad face waked me. I shall meet it soon
 Waking . . .

(He rises and stands looking at the corpses.)

As now I look on these pale dead,
 These blossoming branches crushed beneath the fall
 Of that broad trunk to which I laid my axe
 With fullest foresight. So will I ever face
 In thought beforehand to its utmost reach
 The consequences of my conscious deeds ;
 So face them after, bring them to my bed,
 And never drug my soul to sleep with lies.
 If they are cruel, they shall be arraigned
 By that true name ; they shall be justified
 By my high purpose, by the clear-seen good
 That grew into my vision as I grew,
 And makes my nature's function, the full pulse
 Of inbred kingship. Catholics,
 Arabs, and Hebrews, have their god apiece
 To fight and conquer for them, or be bruised,
 Like Allah now, yet keep avenging stores
 Of patient wrath. The Zíncali have no God
 Who speaks to them and calls them his, unless
 I, Zarca, carry living in my frame
 The power divine that chooses them and saves.
 "Life and more life unto the chosen, death
 To all things living that would stifle them !"
 So speaks each god that makes a nation strong ;
 Burns trees and brutes and slays all hindering men.
 The Spaniards boast their god the strongest now ;
 They win most towns by treachery, make most slaves,
 Burn the most vines and men, and rob the most.
 I fight against that strength, and in my turn
 Slay these brave young who duteously strove.
 Cruel ? ay, it is cruel. But, how else ?
 To save, we kill ; each blow we strike at guilt
 Hurts innocence with its shock. Men might well seek
 For purifying rites ; even pious deeds

Need washing. But my cleansing waters flow
Solely from my intent.

(He turns away from the bodies to where his garments lie, but does not lift them.)

And she must suffer!

But she has seen the unchangeable and bowed
Her head beneath the yoke. And she will walk
No more in chilling twilight, for to-day
Rises our sun. The difficult night is past;
We keep the bridge no more, but cross it; march
Forth to a land where all our wars shall be
With greedy obstinate plants that will not yield
Fruit for their nurture. All our race shall come
From north, west, east, a kindred multitude,
And make large fellowship, and raise inspired
The shout divine, the unison of resolve.
So I, so she, will see our race redeemed.
And their keen love of family and tribe
Shall no more thrive on cunning, hide and lurk
In petty arts of abject hunted life,
But grow heroic in the sanctioning light,
And feed with ardent blood a nation's heart.
That is my work: and it is well begun.
On to achievement!

*(He takes up the mail-shirt, and looks at it, then
throws it down again.)*

No, I'll none of you!

To-day there'll be no fighting. A few hours,
And I shall doff these garments of the Moor:
Till then I will walk lightly and breathe high.

SEPHARDO *(appearing at the archway leading into
the outer gallery).*

You bade me wake you . . .

ZARCA.

Welcome, Doctor; see,
With that small task I did but beckon you
To graver work. You know these corpses?

SEPHARDO.

Yes.

I would they were not corpses. Storms will lay
The fairest trees and leave the withered stumps.
This Alvar and the Duke were of one age,
And very loving friends. I minded not
The sight of Don Diego's corpse, for death
Gave him some gentleness, and had he lived
I had still hated him. But this young Alvar
Was doubly noble, as a gem that holds
Rare virtues in its lustre; and his death
Will pierce Don Silva with a poisoned dart.
This fair and curly youth was Arias,
A son of the Pachecos; this dark face . . .

ZARCA.

Enough! you know their names. I had divined
That they were near the Duke, most like had served
My daughter, were her friends; so rescued them
From being flung upon the heap of slain.
Beseech you, Doctor, if you owe me aught
As having served your people, take the pains
To see these bodies buried decently.
And let their names be writ above their graves,
As those of brave young Spaniards who died well.
I needs must bear this womanhood in my heart —
Bearing my daughter there. For once she prayed —
"T was at our parting — "When you see fair hair
Be pitiful." And I am forced to look
On fair heads living and be pitiless.
Your service, Doctor, will be done to her.

SEPHARDO.

A service doubly dear. For these young dead,
And one less happy Spaniard who still lives,
Are offerings which I wrenched from out my heart,
Constrained by cries of Israel: while my hands
Rendered the victims at command, my eyes
Closed themselves vainly, as if vision lay
Through those poor loopholes only. I will go
And see the graves dug by some cypresses.

ZARCA.

Meanwhile the bodies shall rest here. Farewell.

(Exit SEPHARDO.)

Nay, 't is no mockery. She keeps me so
From hardening with the hardness of my acts.
This Spaniard shrouded in her love — I would
He lay here too that I might pity him.

Morning. — The Plaza Santiago in Bedmár. A crowd of townsmen forming an outer circle: within, Zíncali and Moorish soldiers drawn up round the central space. On the higher ground in front of the church a stake with fagots heaped, and at a little distance a gibbet. Moorish music. ZARCA enters, wearing his gold necklace with the Gypsy badge of the flaming torch over the dress of a Moorish Captain, accompanied by a small band of armed Zíncali, who fall aside and range themselves with the other soldiers while he takes his stand in front of the stake and gibbet. The music ceases, and there is expectant silence.

ZARCA.

Men of Bedmár, well-wishers, and allies,
Whether of Moorish or of Hebrew blood,
Who, being galled by the hard Spaniard's yoke,
Have welcomed our quick conquest as release,
I, Zarca, chief of Spanish Gypsies, hold
By delegation of the Moorish King
Supreme command within this town and fort.
Nor will I, with false show of modesty,
Profess myself unworthy of this post,
For so I should but tax the giver's choice.
And, as ye know, while I was prisoner here,
Forging the bullets meant for Moorish hearts,
But likely now to reach another mark,
I learned the secrets of the town's defence,
Caught the loud whispers of your discontent,
And so could serve the purpose of the Moor
As the edge's keenness serves the weapon's weight.
My Zíncali, lynx-eyed and lithe of limb,
Tracked out the high Sierra's hidden path,

Guided the hard ascent, and were the first
 To scale the walls and brave the showering stones.
 In brief, I reached this rank through service done
 By thought of mine and valor of my tribe,
 Yet hold it but in trust, with readiness
 To lay it down ; for we — the Zíncali —
 Will never pitch our tents again on land
 The Spaniard grudges us : we seek a home
 Where we may spread and ripen like the corn
 By blessing of the sun and spacious earth.
 Ye wish us well, I think, and are our friends ?

CROWD.

Long life to Zarca and his Zíncali !

ZARCA.

Now, for the cause of our assembling here.
 'T was my command that rescued from your hands
 That Spanish Prior and Inquisitor
 Whom in fierce retribution you had bound
 And meant to burn, tied to a planted cross.
 I rescued him with promise that his death
 Should be more signal in its justice — made
 Public in fullest sense, and orderly.
 Here, then, you see the stake — slow death by fire ;
 And there a gibbet — swift death by the cord.
 Now hear me, Moors and Hebrews of Bedmár,
 Our kindred by the warmth of Eastern blood !
 Punishing cruel wrong by cruelty
 We copy Christian crime. Vengeance is just :
 Justly we rid the earth of human fiends
 Who carry hell for pattern in their souls.
 But in high vengeance there is noble scorn :
 It tortures not the torturer, nor gives
 Iniquitous payment for iniquity.
 The great avenging angel does not crawl
 To kill the serpent with a mimic fang ;
 He stands erect, with sword of keenest edge
 That slays like lightning. So too we will slay
 The cruel man ; slay him because he works
 Woe to mankind. And I have given command
 To pile these fagots, not to burn quick flesh,

But for a sign of that dire wrong to men
Which arms our wrath with justice. While, to show
This Christian worshipper that we obey
A better law than his, he shall be led
Straight to the gibbet and to swiftest death.
For I, the chieftain of the Gypsies, will,
My people shed no blood but what is shed
In heat of battle or in judgment strict
With calm deliberation on the right.
Such is my will, and if it please you — well.

CROWD.

It pleases us. Long life to Zarca!

ZARCA.

Hark!

The bell is striking, and they bring even now
The prisoner from the fort. What, Nadar?

NADAR (*has appeared, cutting the crowd, and advancing
toward ZARCA till he is near enough to speak in an
under-tone*).

Chief,

I have obeyed your word, have followed it
As water does the furrow in the rock.

ZARCA.

Your band is here?

NADAR.

Yes, and the Spaniard too.

ZARCA.

'T was so I ordered.

NADAR.

Ay, but this sleek hound,
Who slipped his collar off to join the wolves,
Has still a heart for none but kennelled brutes.
He rages at the taking of the town,

Says all his friends are butchered ; and one corpse
 He stumbled on — well, I would sooner be
 A murdered Gypsy's dog, and howl for him,
 Than be this Spaniard. Rage has made him whiter.
 One townsman taunted him with his escape,
 And thanked him for so favoring us. . . .

ZARCA.

Enough.

You gave him my command that he should wait
 Within the castle, till I saw him ?

NADAR.

Yes.

But he defied me, broke away, ran loose
 I know not whither ; he may soon be here.
 I came to warn you, lest he work us harm.

ZARCA.

Fear not, I know the road I travel by :
 Its turns are no surprises. He who rules
 Must humor full as much as he commands ;
 Must let men vow impossibilities ;
 Grant folly's prayers that hinder folly's wish
 And serve the ends of wisdom. Ah, he comes !

[Sweeping like some pale herald from the dead,
 Whose shadow-nurtured eyes, dazed by full light,
 See nought without, but give reverted sense
 To the soul's imagery, Silva came,
 The wondering people parting wide to get
 Continuous sight of him as he passed on —
 This high hidalgo, who through blooming years
 Had shone on men with planetary calm,
 Believed-in with all sacred images
 And saints that must be taken as they were,
 Though rendering meagre service for men's praise :
 Bareheaded now, carrying an unsheathed sword,
 And on his breast, where late he bore the cross,
 Wearing the Gypsy badge ; his form aslant,
 Driven, it seemed, by some invisible chase,
 Right to the front of Zarca. There he paused.]

DON SILVA.

Chief, you are treacherous, cruel, devilish! —
 Relentless as a curse that once let loose
 From lips of wrath, lives bodiless to destroy,
 And darkly traps a man in nets of guilt
 Which could not weave themselves in open day
 Before his eyes. Oh, it was bitter wrong
 To hold this knowledge locked within your mind,
 To stand with waking eyes in broadest light,
 And see me, dreaming, shed my kindred's blood.
 'T is horrible that men with hearts and hands
 Should smile in silence like the firmament
 And see a fellow-mortal draw a lot
 On which themselves have written agony!
 Such injury has no redress, no healing
 Save what may lie in stemming further ill.
 Poor balm for maiming! Yet I come to claim it.

ZARCA.

First prove your wrongs, and I will hear your claim.
 Mind, you are not commander of Bedmár,
 Nor duke, nor knight, nor anything for me,
 Save a sworn Gypsy, subject with my tribe,
 Over whose deeds my will is absolute.
 You chose that lot, and would have railed at me
 Had I refused it you: I warned you first
 What oaths you had to take . . .

DON SILVA.

You never warned me

That you had linked yourself with Moorish men
 To take this town and fortress of Bedmár —
 Slay my near kinsman, him who held my place,
 Our house's heir and guardian — slay my friend,
 My chosen brother — desecrate the church
 Where once my mother held me in her arms,
 Making the holy chrism holier
 With tears of joy that fell upon my brow!
 You never warned . . .

ZARCA.

I warned you of your oath.
You shrank not, were resolved, were sure your place
Would never miss you, and you had your will.
I am no priest, and keep no consciences:
I keep my own place and my own command.

DON SILVA.

I said my place would never miss me — yes!
A thousand Spaniards died on that same day
And were not missed; their garments clothed the backs
That else were bare. . . .

ZARCA.

But you were just the one
Above the thousand, had you known the die
That fate was throwing then.

DON SILVA.

You knew it — you!
With fiendish knowledge, smiling at the end.
You knew what snares had made my flying steps
Murderous; you let me lock my soul with oaths
Which your acts made a hellish sacrament.
I say, you knew this as a fiend would know it,
And let me damn myself.

ZARCA.

The deed was done
Before you took your oath, or reached our camp, —
Done when you slipped in secret from the post
'T was yours to keep, and not to meditate
If others might not fill it. For your oath,
What man is he who brandishes a sword
In darkness, kills his friends, and rages then
Against the night that kept him ignorant?
Should I, for one unstable Spaniard, quit
My steadfast ends as father and as chief;

Renounce my daughter and my people's hope,
Lest a deserter should be made ashamed !

DON SILVA.

Your daughter — O great God ! I vent but madness.
The past will never change. I come to stem
Harm that may yet be hindered. Chief — this stake —
Tell me who is to die ! Are you not bound
Yourself to him you took in fellowship ?
The town is yours ; let me but save the blood
That still is warm in men who were my . . .

ZARCA.

Peace !

They bring the prisoner.

[Zarca waved his arm
With head averse, in peremptory sign
That 'twixt them now there should be space and silence.
Most eyes had turned to where the prisoner
Advanced among his guards ; and Silva too
Turned eagerly, all other striving quelled
By striving with the dread lest he should see
His thought outside him. And he saw it there.
The prisoner was Father Isidor :
The man whom once he fiercely had accused
As author of his misdeeds — whose designs
Had forced him into fatal secrecy.
The imperious and inexorable Will
Was yoked, and he who had been pitiless
To Silva's love, was led to pitiless death.
O hateful victory of blind wishes — prayers
Which hell had overheard and swift fulfilled !
The triumph was a torture, turning all
The strength of passion into strength of pain.
Remorse was born within him, that dire birth
Which robs all else of nurture — cancerous,
Forcing each pulse to feed its anguish, turning
All sweetest residues of healthy life
To fibrous clutches of slow misery.
Silva had but rebelled — he was not free ;
And all the subtle cords that bound his soul

Were tightened by the strain of one rash leap
Made in defiance. He accused no more,
But dumbly shrank before accusing throngs
Of thoughts, the impetuous recurrent rush
Of all his past-created, unchanged self.
The Father came bareheaded, frocked, a rope
Around his neck, — but clad with majesty,
The strength of resolute undivided souls
Who, owning law, obey it. In his hand
He bore a crucifix, and praying, gazed
Solely on that white image. But his guards
Parted in front, and paused as they approached
The centre where the stake was. Isidor
Lifted his eyes to look around him — calm,
Prepared to speak last words of willingness
To meet his death — last words of faith unchanged,
That, working for Christ's kingdom, he had wrought
Righteously. But his glance met Silva's eyes
And drew him. Even images of stone
Look living with reproach on him who maims,
Profanes, defiles them. Silva penitent
Moved forward, would have knelt before the man
Who still was one with all the sacred things
That came back on him in their sacredness,
Kindred, and oaths, and awe, and mystery.
But at the sight, the Father thrust the cross
With deprecating act before him, and his face
Pale-quivering, flashed out horror like white light
Flashed from the angel's sword that dooming drave
The sinner to the wilderness. He spoke.]

FATHER ISIDOR.

Back from me, traitorous and accursed man !
Defile not me, who grasp the holiest,
With touch or breath ! Thou foulest murderer !
Fouler than Cain who struck his brother down
In jealous rage, thou for thy base delight
Hast oped the gate for wolves to come and tear
Uncounted brethren, weak and strong alike,
The helpless priest, the warrior all unarmed
Against a faithless leader : on thy head
Will rest the sacrilege, on thy soul the blood.
These blind barbarians, misbelievers, Moors,

Are but as Pilate and his soldiery ;
 Thou, Judas, weighted with that heaviest crime
 Which deepens hell ! I warned you of this end.
 A traitorous leader, false to God and man ;
 A knight apostate, you shall soon behold
 Above your people's blood the light of flames
 Kindled by you to burn me — burn the flesh
 Twin with your father's. O most wretched man !
 Whose memory shall be of broken oaths —
 Broken for lust — I turn away mine eyes
 For ever from you. See, the stake is ready
 And I am ready too.

DON SILVA.

It shall not be !
*(Raising his sword, he rushes in front of the
 guards who are advancing, and impedes them.)*
 If you are human, Chief, hear my demand !
 Stretch not my soul upon the endless rack
 Of this man's torture !

ZARCA.

Stand aside, my lord !
 Put up your sword. You vowed obedience
 To me, your chief. It was your latest vow.

DON SILVA.

No ! hew me from the spot, or fasten me
 Amid the fagots too, if he must burn.

ZARCA.

What should befall that persecuting monk
 Was fixed before you came : no cruelty,
 No nicely measured torture, weight for weight
 Of injury, no luscious-toothed revenge
 That justifies the injurer by its joy :
 I seek but rescue and security
 For harmless men, and such security
 Means death to vipers and inquisitors.
 These fagots shall but innocently blaze
 In sign of gladness, when this man is dead,

That one more torturer has left the earth.
'T is not for infidels to burn live men
And ape the rules of Christian piety.
This hard oppressor shall not die by fire :
He mounts the gibbet, dies a speedy death,
That, like a transfixed dragon, he may cease
To vex mankind. Quick, guards, and clear the path !

[As well-trained hounds that hold their fleetness tense
In watchful, loving fixity of dark eyes,
And move with movement of their master's will,
The Gypsies with a wavelike swiftiness net
Around the Father, and in wheeling course
Passed beyond Silva to the gibbet's foot,
Behind their chieftain. Sudden left alone
With weapon bare, the multitude aloof,
Silva was mazed in doubtful consciousness,
As one who slumbering in the day awakes
From striving into freedom, and yet feels
His sense half captive to intangible things ;
Then with a flush of new decision sheathed
His futile naked weapon, and strode quick
To Zarca, speaking with a voice new-toned,
The struggling soul's hoarse, suffocated cry
Beneath the grappling anguish of despair.]

DON SILVA.

You, Zíncalo, devil, blackest infidel !
You cannot hate that man as you hate me !
Finish your torture — take me — lift me up
And let the crowd spit at me — every Moor
Shoot reeds at me, and kill me with slow death
Beneath the mid-day fervor of the sun —
Or crucify me with a thieving hound —
Slake your hate so, and I will thank it : spare me
Only this man !

ZARCA.

Madman, I hate you not,
But if I did, my hate were poorly served
By my device, if I should strive to mix
A bitterer misery for you than to taste

With leisure of a soul in unharmed limbs
 The flavor of your folly. For my course,
 It has a goal, and takes no truant path
 Because of you. I am your chief: to me
 You're nought more than a Zíncalo in revolt.

DON SILVA.

No, I'm no Zíncalo! I here disown
 The name I took in madness. Here I tear
 This badge away. I am a Catholic knight,
 A Spaniard who will die a Spaniard's death!

[Hark! while he casts the badge upon the ground
 And tramples on it, Silva hears a shout:
 Was it a shout that threatened him? He looked
 From out the dizzying flames of his own rage
 In hope of adversaries — and he saw above
 The form of Father Isidor upswung
 Convulsed with martyr throes; and knew the shout
 For wonted exultation of the crowd
 When malefactors die — or saints, or heroes.
 And now to him that white-frocked murdered form
 Which hanging judged him as its murderer,
 Turned to a symbol of his guilt, and stirred
 Tremors till then unwaked. With sudden snatch
 At something hidden in his breast, he strode
 Right upon Zarca: at the instant, down
 Fell the great Chief, and Silva, staggering back,
 Heard not the Gypsies' shriek, felt not the fangs
 Of their fierce grasp — heard, felt but Zarca's words
 Which seemed his soul outleaping in a cry
 And urging men to run like rival waves
 Whose rivalry is but obedience.]

ZARCA (*as he falls*).

My daughter! call her! Call my daughter!

NADAR (*supporting ZARCA and crying to the
 Gypsies who have clutched SILVA*).

Stay!

Tear not the Spaniard, tie him to the stake:
 Hear what the Chief shall bid us — there is time!

[Swiftly they tied him, pleasing vengeance so
 With promise that would leave them free to watch
 Their stricken good, their Chief stretched helplessly
 Pillowed upon the strength of loving limbs.
 He heaved low groans, but would not spend his breath
 In useless words : he waited till *she* came,
 Keeping his life within the citadel
 Of one great hope. And now around him closed
 (But in wide circle, checked by loving fear)
 His people all, holding their wails suppressed
 Lest Death believed-in should be over-bold :
 All life hung on their Chief — he would not die ;
 His image gone, there were no wholeness left
 To make a world of for the Zúncali's thought.
 Eager they stood, but hushed ; the outer crowd
 Spoke only in low murmurs, and some climbed
 And clung with legs and arms on perilous coigns,
 Striving to see where that colossal life
 Lay panting — lay a Titan struggling still
 To hold and give the precious hidden fire
 Before the stronger grappled him. Above
 The young bright morning cast athwart white walls
 Her shadows blue, and with their clear-cut line,
 Mildly relentless as the dial-hand's,
 Measured the shrinking future of an hour
 Which held a shrinking hope. And all the while
 The silent beat of time in each man's soul
 Made aching pulses.

But the cry, "She comes!"
 Parted the crowd like waters : and she came.
 Swiftly as once before, inspired with joy,
 She flashed across the space and made new light,
 Glowing upon the glow of evening,
 So swiftly now she came, inspired with woe,
 Strong with the strength of all her father's pain
 Thrilling her as with fire of rage divine
 And battling energy. She knew — saw all :
 The stake with Silva bound — her father pierced —
 To this she had been born : a second time
 Her father called her to the task of life.

She knelt beside him. Then he raised himself,
 And on her face there flashed from his the light
 As of a star that waned, but flames anew

In mighty dissolution ; 't was the flame
Of a surviving trust, in agony.
He spoke the parting prayer that was command,
Must sway her will, and reign invisibly.]

ZARCA.

My daughter, you have promised — you will live
To save our people. In my garments here
I carry written pledges from the Moor :
He will keep faith in Spain and Africa.
Your weakness may be stronger than my strength,
Winning more love. . . . I cannot tell the end. . . .
I held my people's good within my breast.
Behold, now I deliver it to you.
See, it still breathes unstrangled — if it dies,
Let not your failing will be murderer. . . .
Rise, tell our people now I wait in pain . . .
I cannot die until I hear them say
They will obey you.

[Meek, she pressed her lips
With slow solemnity upon his brow,
Sealing her pledges. Firmly then she rose,
And met her people's eyes with kindred gaze,
Dark-flashing, fired by effort strenuous
Trampling on pain.]

FEDALMA.

Ye Zincali all, who hear !
Your Chief is dying : I his daughter live
To do his dying will. He asks you now
To promise me obedience as your Queen,
That we may seek the land he won for us,
And live the better life for which he toiled.
Speak now, and fill my father's dying ear
With promise that you will obey him dead,
Obeying me his child.

[Straightway arose
A shout of promise, sharpening into cries
That seemed to plead despairingly with death.]

THE ZINGALI.

We will obey ! Our chief shall never die !
 We will obey him — will obey our Queen !

[The shout unanimous, the concurrent rush
 Of many voices, quiring shook the air
 With multitudinous wave : now rose, now fell,
 Then rose again, the echoes following slow,
 As if the scattered brethren of the tribe
 Had caught afar and joined the ready vow.
 Then some could hold no longer, but must rush
 To kiss his dying feet, and some to kiss
 The hem of their Queen's garment. But she raised
 Her hand to hush them. "Hark ! your Chief may speak
 Another wish." Quickly she kneeled again,
 While they upon the ground kept motionless,
 With head outstretched. They heard his words ; for
 now,
 Grasping at Nadar's arm, he spoke more loud,
 As one who, having fought and conquered, hurls
 His strength away with hurling off his shield.]

ZARCA.

Let loose the Spaniard ! give him back his sword .
 He cannot move to any vengeance more —
 His soul is locked 'twixt two opposing crimes.
 I charge you let him go unharmed and free
 Now through your midst. . . .

[With that he sank again —
 His breast heaved strongly tow'rd sharp sudden falls,
 And all his life seemed needed for each breath :
 Yet once he spoke.]

My daughter, lay your arm
 Beneath my head . . . so . . . bend and breathe on me.
 I cannot see you more . . . the Night is come.
 Be strong . . . remember . . . I can only . . . die.

[His voice went into silence, but his breast
 Heaved long and moaned : its broad strength kept a life

That neard nought, saw nought, save what once had
 been,
 And what might be in days and realms afar —
 Which now in pale procession faded on
 Toward the thick darkness. And she bent above
 In sacramental watch to see great Death,
 Companion of her future, who would wear
 For ever in her eyes her father's form.

And yet she knew that hurrying feet had gone
 To do the Chief's behest, and in her soul
 He who was once its lord was being jarred
 With loosening of cords, that would not loose
 The tightening torture of his anguish. 'This —
 Oh, she knew it! — knew it as martyrs knew
 The prongs that tore their flesh, while yet their tongues
 Refused the ease of lies. In moments high
 Space widens in the soul. And so she knelt,
 Clinging with piety and awed resolve
 Beside this altar of her father's life,
 Seeing long travel under solemn suns
 Stretching beyond it; never turned her eyes,
 Yet felt that Silva passed; beheld his face
 Pale, vivid, all alone, imploring her
 Across black waters fathomless.

And he passed.
 The Gypsies made wide pathway, shrank aloof
 As those who fear to touch the thing they hate,
 'st hate triumphant, mastering all the limbs,
 'uld tear, bite, crush, in spite of hindering will.
 rly he walked, reluctant to be safe
 Y^{et} bear dishonored life which none assailed
 Y^{et} hesitatingly, all his frame instinct
 To high-born spirit, never used to dread
 To Pa^{tr}ch for smiles, yet stung, yet quivering
 That v^{er}l^{ess} strength, and in his soul convulsed
 And liv^{es} where pale horror held a lamp
 Speak n^o-reaching crime. Silence hung round:
 With pr^o the Plaça hushed itself to hear
 Obeying p^{er}s and the Chief's deep dying breath.
 ened in the stillness, and the light
 A shout^{ed} clear gaze upon his misery.
 That s^{he} could not pass her without pause:
 That s^{he} ant he must pause and look at her;

But with that glance at her averted head,
New-urged by pain he turned away and went,
Carrying for ever with him what he fled —
Her murdered love — her love, a dear wronged ghost
Facing him, beauteous, 'mid the throngs of hell.

O fallen and forsaken ! were no hearts
Amid that crowd, mindful of what had been ? —
Hearts such as wait on beggared royalty,
Or silent watch by sinners who despair ?

Silva had vanished. That dismissed revenge
Made larger room for sorrow in fierce hearts ;
And sorrow filled them. For the Chief was dead.
The mighty breast subsided slow to calm.
Slow from the face the ethereal spirit waned,
As wanes the parting glory from the heights,
And leaves them in their pallid majesty.
Fedalma kissed the marble lips, and said,
“ He breathes no more.” And then a long loud wail,
Poured out upon the morning, made her light
Ghastly as smiles on some fair maniac's face
Smiling unconscious o'er her bridegroom's corse.
The wailing men in eager press closed round,
And made a shadowing pall beneath the sun.
They lifted reverent the prostrate strength,
Sceptred anew by death. Fedalma walked
Tearless, erect, following the dead — her cries
Deep smothering in her breast, as one who guides
Her children through the wilds, and sees and knows
Of danger more than they, and feels more pangs,
Yet shrinks not, groans not, bearing in her heart
Their ignorant misery and their trust in her.

BOOK V.

THE eastward rocks of Almería's bay
Answer long farewells of the travelling sun
With softest glow as from an inward pulse
Changing and flushing: all the Moorish ships
Seem conscious too, and shoot out sudden shadows;
Their black hulls snatch a glory, and their sails
Show variegated radiance, gently stirred
Like broad wings poised. Two galleys moored apart
Show decks as busy as a home of ants
Storing new forage; from their sides the boats,
Slowly pushed off, anon with flashing oar
Make transit to the quay's smooth-quarried edge,
Where thronging Gypsies are in haste to lade
Each as it comes with grandames, babes, and wives,
Or with dust-tinted goods, the company
Of wandering years. Nought seems to lie unmoved,
For 'mid the throng the lights and shadows play,
And make all surface eager, while the boats
Sway restless as a horse that heard the shouts
And surging hum incessant. Naked limbs
With beauteous ease bend, lift, and throw, or raise
High signalling hands. The black-haired mother steps
Athwart the boat's edge, and with opened arms,
A wandering Isis outcast from the gods,
Leans towards her lifted little one. The boat
Full-laden cuts the waves, and dirge-like cries
Rise and then fall within it as it moves
From high to lower and from bright to dark.
Hither and thither, grave white-turbaned Moors
Move helpfully, and some bring welcome gifts,
Bright stuffs and cutlery, and bags of seed
To make new waving crops in Africa.
Others aloof with folded arms slow-eyed



" Their sails

Like broad wings poised."

— *Phyllanthus* sp.

Survey man's labor, saying, "God is great ;"
Or seek with question deep the Gypsies' root,
And whether their false faith, being small, will prove
Less damning than the copious false creeds
Of Jews and Christians : Moslem subtlety
Found balanced reasons, warranting suspense
As to whose hell was deepest — 't was enough
That there was room for all. Thus the sedate.
The younger heads were busy with the tale
Of that great Chief whose exploits helped the Moor.
And, talking still, they shouldered past their friends
Following some lure which held their distant gaze
To eastward of the quay, where yet remained
A low black tent close guarded all around
By well-armed Gypsies. Fronting it above,
Raised by stone steps that sought a jutting strand,
Fedalma stood and marked with anxious watch
Each laden boat the remnant lessening
Of cargo on the shore, or traced the course
Of Nadar to and fro in hard command
Of noisy tumult ; imaging oft anew
How much of labor still deferred the hour
When they must lift the boat and bear away
Her father's coffin, and her feet must quit
This shore for ever. Motionless she stood,
Black-crowned with wreaths of many-shadowed hair ;
Black-robed, but bearing wide upon her breast
Her father's golden necklace and his badge.
Her limbs were motionless, but in her eyes
And in her breathing lip's soft tremulous curve
Was intense motion as of prisoned fire
Escaping subtly in outleaping thought.

She watches anxiously, and yet she dreams :
The busy moments now expand, now shrink
To narrowing swarms within the reflux space
Of changeful consciousness. For in her thought
Already she has left the fading shore,
Sails with her people, seeks an unknown land,
And bears the burning length of weary days
That parching fall upon her father's hope,
Which she must plant and see it wither only —
Wither and die. She saw the end begun.
The Gypsy hearts were not unfaithful : she

Was centre to the savage loyalty
Which vowed obedience to Zarca dead.
But soon their natures missed the constant stress
Of his command, that, while it fired, restrained
By urgency supreme, and left no play
To fickle impulse scattering desire.
They loved their Queen, trusted in Zarca's child,
Would bear her o'er the desert on their arms
And think the weight a gladsome victory;
But that great force which knit them into one,
The invisible passion of her father's soul,
That wrought them visibly into its will,
And would have bound their lives with permanence,
Was gone. Already Hassan and two bands,
Drawn by fresh baits of gain, had newly sold
Their service to the Moors, despite her call,
Known as the echo of her father's will,
To all the tribe, that they should pass with her
Straightway to Telemsán. They were not moved
By worse rebellion than the wilful wish
To fashion their own service; they still meant
To come when it should suit them. But she said,
This is the cloud no bigger than a hand,
Sure-threatening. In a little while, the tribe
That was to be the ensign of the race,
And draw it into conscious union,
Itself would break in small and scattered bands
That, living on scant prey, would still disperse
And propagate forgetfulness. Brief years,
And that great purpose fed with vital fire
That might have glowed for half a century,
Subduing, quickening, shaping, like a sun —
Would be a faint tradition, flickering low
In dying memories, fringing with dim light
The nearer dark.

Far, far the future stretched
Beyond that busy present on the quay,
Far her straight path beyond it. Yet she watched
To mark the growing hour, and yet in dream
Alternate she beheld another track,
And felt herself unseen pursuing it
Close to a wanderer, who with haggard gaze
Looked out on loneliness. The backward years —
Oh, she would not forget them — would not drink

Of waters that brought rest, while he far off
Remembered. "Father, I renounced the joy;
You must forgive the sorrow."

So she stood,
Her struggling life compressed into that hour,
Yearning, resolving, conquering; though she seemed
Still as a tutelary image sent
To guard her people and to be the strength
Of some rock-citadel.

Below her sat
Slim mischievous Hinda, happy, red-bedecked
With rows of berries, grinning, nodding oft,
And shaking high her small dark arm and hand
Responsive to the black-maned Ismaël,
Who held aloft his spoil, and clad in skins
Seemed the Boy-prophet of the wilderness
Escaped from tasks prophetic. But anon
Hinda would backward turn upon her knees,
And like a pretty loving hound would bend
To fondle her Queen's feet, then lift her head
Hoping to feel the gently pressing palm
Which touched the deeper sense. Fedalma knew —
From out the black robe stretched her speaking hand
And shared the girl's content.

So the dire hours
Burdened with destiny — the death of hopes
Darkening long generations, or the birth
Of thoughts undying — such hours sweep along
In their aerial ocean measureless
Myriads of little joys, that ripen sweet
And soothe the sorrowful spirit of the world,
Groaning and travelling with the painful birth
Of slow redemption.

But emerging now
From eastward fringing lines of idling men
Quick Juan lightly sought the upward steps
Behind Fedalma, and two paces off,
With head uncovered, said in gentle tones,
"Lady Fedalma!" — (Juan's password now
Used by no other), and Fedalma turned,
Knowing who sought her. He advanced a step,
And meeting straight her large calm questioning gaze,
Warned her of some grave purport by a face
That told of trouble. Lower still he spoke.

JUAN.

Look from me, lady, towards a moving form
That quits the crowd and seeks the lonelier strand —
A tall and gray-clad pilgrim. . . .

[Solemnly

His low tones fell on her, as if she passed
Into religious dimness among tombs,
And trod on names in everlasting rest.
Lingeringly she looked, and then with voice
Deep and yet soft, like notes from some long chord
Responsive to thrilled air, said —]

FEDALMA.

It is he!

[Juan kept silence for a little space,
With reverent caution, lest his lighter grief
Might seem a wanton touch upon her pain.
But time was urging him with visible flight,
Changing the shadows: he must utter all.]

JUAN.

That man was young when last I pressed his hand —
In that dread moment when he left Bedmár.
He has aged since: the week has made him gray.
And yet I know him — knew the white-streaked hair
Before I saw his face, as I should know
The tear-dimmed writing of a friend. See now —
Does he not linger — pause? — perhaps expect . . .

[Juan pled timidly: Fedalma's eyes
Flashed; and through all her frame there ran the shock
Of some sharp-wounding joy, like his who hastes
And dreads to come too late, and comes in time
To press a loved hand dying. She was mute
And made no gesture: all her being paused
In resolution, as some leonine wave
That makes a moment's silence ere it leaps.]

JUAN.

He came from Carthage, in a boat
 Too slight for safety ; yon small two-oared boat
 Below the rock ; the fisher-boy within
 Awaits his signal. But the pilgrim waits. . . .

FEDALMA.

Yes, I will go ! — Father, I owe him this,
 For loving me made all his misery.
 And we will look once more — will say farewell
 As in a solemn rite to strengthen us
 For our eternal parting. Juan, stay
 Here in my place, to warn me, were there need.
 And, Hinda, follow me !

[All men who watched
 Lost her regretfully, then drew content
 From thought that she must quickly come again,
 And filled the time with striving to be near.

She, down the steps, along the sandy brink
 To where he stood, walked firm ; with quickened step
 The moment when each felt the other saw.
 He moved at sight of her : their glances met ;
 It seemed they could no more remain aloof
 Than nearing waters hurrying into one.
 Yet their steps slackened and they paused apart,
 Pressed backward by the force of memories
 Which reigned supreme as death above desire.
 Two paces off they stood and silently
 Looked at each other. Was it well to speak ?
 Could speech be clearer, stronger, tell them more
 Than that long gaze of their renouncing love ?
 They passed from silence hardly knowing how ;
 It seemed they heard each other's thought before.]

DON SILVA.

I go to be absolved, to have my life
 Washed into fitness for an offering
 To injured Spain. But I have nought to give
 For that last injury to her I loved

Better than I loved Spain. I am accurst
Above all sinners, being made the curse
Of her I sinned for. Pardon? Penitence?
When they have done their utmost, still beyond
Out of their reach stands Injury unchanged
And changeless. I should see it still in heaven —
Out of my reach, for ever in my sight:
Wearing your grief, 'twould hide the smiling seraphs.
I bring no puling prayer, Fedalma — ask
No balm of pardon that may soothe my soul
For others' bleeding wounds: I am not come
To say, "Forgive me:" you must not forgive,
For you must see me ever as I am —
Your father's . . .

FEDALMA.

Speak it not! Calamity
Comes like a deluge and o'erfloods our crimes,
Till sin is hidden in woe. You — I — we two,
Grasping we knew not what, that seemed delight,
Opened the sluices of that deep.

DON SILVA.

We two? —

Fedalma, you were blameless, helpless.

FEDALMA.

No!

It shall not be that you did aught alone.
For when we loved I willed to reign in you,
And I was jealous even of the day
If it could gladden you apart from me.
And so, it must be that I shared each deed
Our love was root of.

DON SILVA.

Dear! you share the woe —
Nay, the worst dart of vengeance fell on you.

FEDALMA.

Vengeance! She does but sweep us with her skirts —
She takes large space, and lies a baleful light

Revolving with long years — sees children's children,
 Blights them in their prime. . . . Oh, if two lovers leaned
 To breathe one air and spread a pestilence,
 They would but lie two livid victims dead
 Amid the city of the dying. We
 With our poor petty lives have strangled one
 That ages watch for vainly.

DON SILVA.

Deep despair
 Fills all your tones as with slow agony.
 Speak words that narrow anguish to some shape :
 Tell me what dread is close before you ?

FEDALMA.

None.

No dread, but clear assurance of the end.
 My father held within his mighty frame
 A people's life : great futures died with him
 Never to rise, until the time shall ripe
 Some other hero with the will to save
 The outcast Zíncali.

DON SILVA.

And yet their shout —
 I heard it — sounded as the plenteous rush
 Of full-fed sources, shaking their wild souls
 With power that promised sway.

FEDALMA.

Ah yes, that shout
 Came from full hearts : they meant obedience.
 But they are orphaned : their poor childish feet
 Are vagabond in spite of love, and stray
 Forgetful after little lures. For me —
 I am but as the funeral urn that bears
 The ashes of a leader.

DON SILVA.

O great God !
 What am I but a miserable brand
 Lit by mysterious wrath ? I lie cast down

A blackened branch upon the desolate ground
Where once I kindled ruin. I shall drink
No cup of purest water but will taste
Bitter with thy lone hopelessness, Fedalma.

FEDALMA.

Nay, Silva, think of me as one who sees
A light serene and strong on one sole path
Which she will tread till death . . .
He trusted me, and I will keep his trust :
My life shall be its temple. I will plant
His sacred hope within the sanctuary
And die its priestess — though I die alone,
A hoary woman on the altar-step,
Cold 'mid cold ashes. That is my chief good.
The deepest hunger of a faithful heart
Is faithfulness. Wish me nought else. And you —
You too will live. . . .

DON SILVA.

I go to Rome, to seek
The right to use my knightly sword again ;
The right to fill my place and live or die
So that all Spaniards shall not curse my name.
I sate one hour upon the barren rock
And longed to kill myself ; but then I said,
I will not leave my name in infamy,
I will not be perpetual rottenness
Upon the Spaniard's air. If I must sink
At last to hell, I will not take my stand
Among the coward crew who could not bear
The harm themselves had done, which others bore.
My young life yet may fill some fatal breach,
And I will take no pardon, not my own,
Not God's — no pardon idly on my knees ;
But it shall come to me upon my feet
And in the thick of action, and each deed
That carried shame and wrong shall be the sting
That drives me higher up the steep of honor
In deeds of duteous service to that Spain
Who nourished me on her expectant breast,
The heir of highest gifts. I will not fling

My earthly being down for carrion
 To fill the air with loathing : I will be
 The living prey of some fierce noble death
 That leaps upon me while I move. Aloud
 I said, "I will redeem my name," and then —
 I know not if aloud : I felt the words
 Drinking up all my senses — "She still lives.
 I would not quit the dear familiar earth
 Where both of us behold the self-same sun,
 Where there can be no strangeness 'twixt our thoughts
 So deep as their communion." Resolute
 I rose and walked. — Fedalma, think of me
 As one who will regain the only life
 Where he is other than apostate — one
 Who seeks but to renew and keep the vows
 Of Spanish knight and noble. But the breach
 Outside those vows — the fatal second breach —
 Lies a dark gulf where I have nought to cast,
 Not even expiation — poor pretence,
 Which changes nought but what survives the past,
 And raises not the dead. That deep dark gulf
 Divides us.

FEDALMA.

Yes, for ever. We must walk
 Apart unto the end. Our marriage rite
 Is our resolve that we will each be true
 To high allegiance, higher than our love.
 Our dear young love — its breath was happiness !
 But it had grown upon a larger life
 Which tore its roots asunder. We rebelled —
 The larger life subdued us. Yet we are wed ;
 For we shall carry each the pressure deep
 Of the other's soul. I soon shall leave the shore.
 The winds to-night will bear me far away.
 My lord, farewell !

He did not say "Farewell."
 But neither knew that he was silent. She,
 For one long moment, moved not. They knew nought
 Save that they parted ; for their mutual gaze
 As with their soul's full speech forbade their hands
 To seek each other — those oft-clasping hands

Which had a memory of their own, and went
Widowed of one dear touch for evermore.
At last she turned and with swift movement passed,
Beckoning to Hinda, who was bending low
And lingered still to wash her shells, but soon
Leaping and scampering followed, while her Queen
Mounted the steps again and took her place,
Which Juan rendered silently.

And now
The press upon the quay was thinned; the ground
Was cleared of cumbering heaps, the eager shouts
Had sunk, and left a murmur more restrained
By common purpose. All the men ashore
Were gathering into ordered companies,
And with less clamor filled the waiting boats,
As if the speaking light commanded them
To quiet speed: for now the farewell glow
Was on the topmost heights, and where far ships
Were southward tending, tranquil, slow, and white
Upon the luminous meadow toward the verge.
The quay was in still shadow, and the boats
Went sombrely upon the sombre waves.
Fedalma watched again; but now her gaze
Takes in the eastward bay, where that small bark
Which held the fisher-boy floats weightier
With one more life, that rests upon the oar
Watching with her. He would not go away
Till she was gone; he would not turn his face
Away from her at parting: but the sea
Should widen slowly 'twixt their seeking eyes.

The time was coming. Nadar had approached.
Was the Queen ready? Would she follow now
Her father's body? For the largest boat
Was waiting at the quay, the last strong band
Of Zincali had ranged themselves in lines
To guard her passage and to follow her.
"Yes, I am ready;" and with action prompt
They cast aside the Gypsy's wandering tomb,
And fenced the space from curious Moors who pressed
To see Chief Zarca's coffin as it lay.
They raised it slowly, holding it aloft
On shoulders proud to bear the heavy load.

Bound on the coffin lay the chieftain's arms,
His Gypsy garments and his coat of mail.
Fedalma saw the burden lifted high,
And then descending followed. All was still.
The Moors aloof could hear the struggling steps
Beneath the lowered burden at the boat —
The struggling calls subdued, till safe released
It lay within, the space around it filled
By black-haired Gypsies. Then Fedalma stepped
From off the shore and saw it flee away —
The land that bred her helping the resolve
Which exiled her for ever.

It was night
Before the ships weighed anchor and gave sail :
Fresh Night emergent in her clearness, lit
By the large crescent moon, with Hesperus,
And those great stars that lead the eager host.
Fedalma stood and watched the little bark
Lying jet-black upon moon-whitened waves.
Silva was standing too. He too divined
A steadfast form that held him with its thought;
And eyes that sought him vanishing : he saw
The waters widen slowly, till at last
Straining he gazed, and knew not if he gazed
On aught but blackness overhung by stars.

NOTES.

P. 32. *Cactus*.

THE Indian fig (*Opuntia*), like the other *Cactaceæ*, is believed to have been introduced into Europe from South America; but every one who has been in the south of Spain will understand why the anachronism has been chosen.

P. 117. *Marranos*.

The name given by the Spanish Jews to the multitudes of their race converted to Christianity at the end of the fourteenth century and beginning of the fifteenth. The lofty derivation from *Maran-atha*, the Lord cometh, seems hardly called for, seeing that *marrano* is Spanish for *pig*. The "old Christians" learned to use the word as a term of contempt for the "new Christians," or converted Jews and their descendants; but not too monotonously, for they often interchanged it with the fine old crusted opprobrium of the name *Jew*. Still, many Marranos held the highest secular and ecclesiastical prizes in Spain, and were respected accordingly.

P. 133. *Celestial Baron*.

The Spaniards conceived their patron Santiago (St. James), the great captain of their armies, as a knight and baron: to them, the incongruity would have lain in conceiving him simply as a Galilean fisherman. And their legend was adopted with respect by devout mediæval minds generally. Dante, in an elevated passage of the *Paradiso* — the memorable opening of *Canto* xxv. — chooses to introduce the Apostle James as *il barone*.

"Indi sì mosse un lume verso noi
Di quella schiera, ond' uscì la primizia
Chè lasciò Cristo de' vicari suoi.
E la mia Donna piena de letizia
Mi disse: Mira, mira, ecco 'l barone
Per cui laggiù si visita Galizia."

P. 134. *The Seven Parts*.

Las Sete Partidas (The Seven Parts) is the title given to the code of laws compiled under Alfonso the Tenth, who reigned in the latter half

of the thirteenth century — 1252-1284. The passage in the text is translated from *Partida II., Ley II.* The whole preamble is worth citing in its old Spanish:—

“*Como deden ser escogidos los caballeros.*”

“Antiguamente para facer caballeros escogien de los venadores de monte, que son homes que sufren grande laceria, et carpinteros, et ferreros, et pedreros, porque usan mucho a ferir et son fuerte de manos; et otrosi de los carniceros, por razon que usan matar las cosas vivas et esparcer la sangre dellas: et aun cataban otra cosa en escogiendolos que fuesen bien faccionadas de miembros para ser recios, et fuertes et ligeros. Et esta manera de escoger usaron los antiguos muy grant tiempo; mas porque despues vieron muchas vegadas que estos atales non habiendo vergüenza olvidaban todas estas cosas sobredichas, et en logar de vincer sus enemigos venciense ellos, tovieron por bien los sabidores destas cosas que catasen homes para esto que hobiesen naturalmente en sí vergüenza. Et sobre esto dixo un sabio que habie nombre VECECIO que fabló de la órden de caballeria, que la vergüenza vieda al caballero que non fuya de la batalla, et por ende ella le face ser vencedor; ca mucho tovieron que era mejor el homo flaco et sofridor, que el fuerte et ligero para foir. Et por esto sobre todas las otras cosas cataron que fuesen homes porque se guardasen de facer cosa por que podiesen caer en vergüenza: et porque estos fueron escogidos de buenos logares et algo, que quiere tanto decir en language de España como bien, por eso los llamaron fijosdalgo, que muestra atanto como fijos de bien. Et en algunos otros logares los llamaron gentiles, et tomaron este nombre de gentileza que muestra atanto como nobleza de bondat, porque los gentiles fueron nobles homes et buenos, et vevieron mas ordenadamente que las otras gentes. Et esta gentileza aviene en tres maneres; la una por linage, la segunda por saber, et la tercera por bondat de armas et de costumbres et de maneras. Et comoquier que estos que la ganan por su sabidoria ó por su bondat, son con derecho llamados nobles et gentiles, mayormiente lo son aquellos que la han por linage antiguamente, et facen buena vida porque les viene de lueño como por heredit: et por ende son mas encargados de facer bien et guardarse de yerro et de malestanz; ca non tan solamente quando lo facen resciben daño et vergüenza ellos mismos, ma aun aquellos onde ellos vienen.”

THE LEGEND OF JUBAL.

WHEN Cain was driven from Jehovah's land
He wandered eastward, seeking some far strand
Ruled by kind gods who asked no offerings
Save pure field-fruits, as aromatic things,
To feed the subtler sense of frames divine
That lived on fragrance for their food and wine:
Wild joyous gods, who winked at faults and folly,
And could be pitiful and melancholy.
He never had a doubt that such gods were;
He looked within, and saw them mirrored there.
Some think he came at last to Tartary,
And some to Ind; but, howsoe'er it be,
His staff he planted where sweet waters ran,
And in that home of Cain the Arts began.

Man's life was spacious in the early world:
It paused, like some slow ship with sail unfurled
Waiting in seas by scarce a wavelet curled;
Beheld the slow star-paces of the skies,
And grew from strength to strength through centuries;
Saw infant trees fill out their giant limbs,
And heard a thousand times the sweet birds' marriage
hymns.

In Cain's young city none had heard of Death
Save him, the founder; and it was his faith
That here, away from harsh Jehovah's law,
Man was immortal, since no halt or flaw
In Cain's own frame betrayed six hundred years,
But dark as pines that autumn never sears
His locks thronged backward as he ran, his frame

Rose like the orbéd sun each morn the same,
Lake-mirrored to his gaze; and that red brand,
The scorching impress of Jehovah's hand,
Was still clear-edged to his unwearied eye,
Its secret firm in time-fraught memory.
He said, "My happy offspring shall not know
That the red life from out a man may flow
When smitten by his brother." True, his race
Bore each one stamped upon his new-born face
A copy of the brand no wit less clear;
But every mother held that little copy dear.

Thus generations in glad idlesse throve,
Nor hunted prey, nor with each other strove;
For clearest springs were plenteous in the land,
And gourds for cups; the ripe fruits sought the hand,
Bending the laden boughs with fragrant gold;
And for their roofs and garments wealth untold
Lay everywhere in grasses and broad leaves:
They labored gently, as a maid who weaves
Her hair in mimic mats, and pauses oft
And strokes across her palm the tresses soft,
Then peeps to watch the poisèd butterfly,
Or little burdened ants that homeward hie.
Time was but leisure to their lingering thought,
There was no need for haste to finish aught;
But sweet beginnings were repeated still
Like infant babblings that no task fulfil;
For love, that loved not change, constrained the simple
will.

Till, hurling stones in mere athletic joy,
Strong Lamech struck and killed his fairest boy,
And tried to wake him with the tenderest cries.
And fetched and held before the glazed eyes
The things they best had loved to look upon;
But never glance or smile or sigh he won.
The generations stood around those twain
Helplessly gazing, till their father Cain
Parted the press, and said, "He will not wake;
This is the endless sleep, and we must make
A bed deep down for him beneath the sod;
For know, my sons, there is a mighty God
Angry with all man's race, but most with me.

I fled from out His land in vain! — 't is He
Who came and slew the lad, for He has found
This home of ours, and we shall all be bound
By the harsh bands of His most cruel will,
Which any moment may some dear one kill.
Nay, though we live for countless moons, at last
We and all ours shall die like summers past.
This is Jehovah's will, and he is strong;
I thought the way I travelled was too long
For Him to follow me: my thought was vain!
He walks unseen, but leaves a track of pain,
Pale Death His footprint is, and He will come again!"

And a new spirit from that hour came o'er
The race of Cain: soft idlesse was no more,
But even the sunshine had a heart of care,
Smiling with hidden dread — a mother fair
Who folding to her breast a dying child
Beams with feigned joy that but makes sadness mild.
Death was now lord of Life, and at his word
Time, vague as air before, new terrors stirred,
With measured wing now audibly arose
Throbbing through all things to some unknown close.
Now glad Content by clutching Haste was torn,
And Work grew eager, and Device was born.
It seemed the light was never loved before,
Now each man said, "'T will go and come no more."
No budding branch, no pebble from the brook,
No form, no shadow, but new dearness took
From the one thought that life must have an end;
And the last parting now began to send
Diffusive dread through love and wedded bliss,
Thrilling them into finer tenderness.
Then Memory disclosed her face divine,
That like the calm nocturnal lights doth shine
Within the soul, and shows the sacred graves,
And shows the presence that no sunlight craves,
No space, no warmth, but moves among them all;
Gone and yet here, and coming at each call,
With ready voice and eyes that understand,
And lips that ask a kiss, and dear responsive hand.
Thus to Cain's race death was tear-watered seed
Of various life and action-shaping need.
But chief the sons of Lamech felt the stings

Of new ambition, and the force that springs
In passion beating on the shores of fate.
They said, "There comes a night when all too late
The mind shall long to prompt the achieving hand,
The eager thought behind closed portals stand,
And the last wishes to the mute lips press
Buried ere death in silent helplessness.
Then while the soul its way with sound can cleave,
And while the arm is strong to strike and heave,
Let soul and arm give shape that will abide
And rule above our graves, and power divide
With that great god of day, whose rays must bend
As we shall make the moving shadows tend.
Come, let us fashion acts that are to be,
When we shall lie in darkness silently,
As our young brother doth, whom yet we see
Fallen and slain, but reigning in our will
By that one image of him pale and still."

For Lamech's sons were heroes of their race :
Jabal, the eldest, bore upon his face
The look of that calm river-god, the Nile,
Mildly secure in power that needs not guile.
But Tubal-Cain was restless as the fire
That glows and spreads and leaps from high to higher
Where'er is aught to seize or to subdue ;
Strong as a storm he lifted or o'erthrew,
His urgent limbs like rounded granite grew,
Such granite as the plunging torrent wears
And roaring rolls around through countless years.
But strength that still on movement must be fed,
Inspiring thought of change, devices bred,
And urged his mind through earth and air to rove
For force that he could conquer if he strove.
For lurking forms that might new tasks fulfil
And yield unwilling to his stronger will.
Such Tubal-Cain. But Jubal had a frame
Fashioned to finer senses, which became
A yearning for some hidden soul of things.
Some outward touch complete on inner springs
That vaguely moving bred a lonely pain.
A want that did but stronger grow with gain
Of all good else, as spirits might be sad
For lack of speech to tell us they are glad

Now Jaba! learned to tame the howling kine,
And from their udders drew the snow-white wine
That stirs the innocent joy, and makes the stream
Of elemental life with fulness teem ;
The star-crowned calves he nursed with feeding hand,
And sheltered them, till all the little band
Stood mustered gazing at the sunset way
Whence he would come with store at close of day.
He soothed the silly sheep with friendly tone
And reared their staggering lambs that, older grown,
Followed his steps with sense-taught memory ;
Till he, their shepherd, could their leader be
And guide them through the pastures as he would,
With sway that grew from ministry of good.
He spread his tents upon the grassy plain
Which, eastward widening like the open main,
Showed the first whiteness 'neath the morning star :
Near him his sister, deft, as women are,
Plied her quick skill in sequence to his thought
Till the hid treasures of the milk she caught
Revealed like pollen 'mid the petals white,
The golden pollen, virgin to the light.
Even the she-wolf with young, on rapine bent,
He caught and tethered in his mat-walled tent,
And cherished all her little sharp-nosed young
Till the small race with hope and terror clung
About his footsteps, till each new-reared brood,
Remoter from the memories of the wood,
More glad discerned their common home with man.
This was the work of Jaba! : he began
The pastoral life, and, sire of joys to be,
Spread the sweet ties that bind the family
O'er dear dumb souls that thrilled at man's caress.
And shared his pains with patient helpfulness.

But Tubal-Cain had caught and yoked the fire,
Yoked it with stones that bent the flaming spire
And made it roar in prisoned servitude
Within the furnace, till with force subdued
It changed all forms he willed to work upon,
Till hard from soft, and soft from hard, he won.
The pliant clay he moulded as he would,
And laughed with joy when 'mid the heat it stood
Shaped as his hand had chosen, while the mass

That from his hold, dark, obstinate, would pass,
He drew all glowing from the busy heat,
All breathing as with life that he could beat
With thundering hammer, making it obey
His will creative, like the pale soft clay.
Each day he wrought and better than he planned,
Shape breeding shape beneath his restless hand.
(The soul without still helps the soul within,
And its deft magic ends what we begin.)
Nay, in his dreams his hammer he would wield
And seem to see a myriad types revealed,
Then spring with wandering triumphant cry,
And, lest the inspiring vision should go by,
Would rush to labor with that plastic zeal
Which all the passion of our life can steal
For force to work with. Each day saw the birth
Of various forms which, flung upon the earth,
Seemed harmless toys to cheat the exacting hour,
But were as seeds instinct with hidden power.
The axe, the club, the spiked wheel, the chain,
Held silently the shrieks and moans of pain;
And near them latent lay in share and spade,
In the strong bar, the saw, and deep-curved blade,
Glad voices of the hearth and harvest-home,
The social good, and all earth's joy to come.
Thus to mixed ends wrought Tubal; and they say,
Some things he made have lasted to this day;
As, thirty silver pieces that were found
By Noah's children buried in the ground.
He made them from mere hunger of device,
Those small white discs; but they became the price
The traitor Judas sold his Master for;
And men still handling them in peace and war
Catch foul disease, that comes as appetite,
And lurks and clings as withering, damning blight.
But Tubal-Cain wot not of treachery,
Nor greedy lust, nor any ill to be,
Save the one ill of sinking into nought,
Banished from action and act-shaping thought.
He was the sire of swift-transforming skill,
Which arms for conquest man's ambitious will;
And round him gladly, as his hammer rung,
Gathered the elders and the growing young:
These handled vaguely and those plied the tools.

Till, happy chance begetting conscious rules,
The home of Cain with industry was rife,
And glimpses of a strong persistent life,
Panting through generations as one breath,
And filling with its soul the blank of death.

Jubal, too, watched the hammer, till his eyes,
No longer following its fall or rise,
Seemed glad with something that they could not see,
But only listened to — some melody,
Wherein dumb longings inward speech had found,
Won from the common store of struggling sound.
Then, as the metal shapes more various grew,
And, hurled upon each other, resonance drew,
Each gave new tones, the revelations dim
Of some external soul that spoke for him :
The hollow vessel's clang, the clash, the boom,
Like light that makes wide spiritual room
And skyey spaces in the spaceless thought,
To Jubal such enlarged passion brought
That love, hope, rage, and all experience,
Were fused in vaster being, fetching thence
Concords and discords, cadences and cries
That seemed from some world-shrouded soul to rise,
Some rapture more intense, some mightier rage,
Some living sea that burst the bounds of man's brief age.

Then with such blissful trouble and glad care
For growth within unborn as mothers bear,
To the far woods he wandered, listening,
And heard the birds their little stories sing
In notes whose rise and fall seemed melted speech —
Melted with tears, smiles, glances — that can reach
More quickly through our frame's deep-winding night,
And without thought raise thought's best fruit, delight.
Pondering, he sought his home again and heard
The fluctuant changes of the spoken word :
The deep remonstrance and the argued want,
Insistent first in close monotonous chant,
Next leaping upward to defiant stand
Or downward beating like the resolute hand ;
The mother's call, the children's answering cry,
The laugh's light cataract tumbling from on high ;
The suasive repetitions Jabal taught,

That timid browsing cattle homeward brought;
The clear-winged fugue of echoes vanishing;
And through them all the hammer's rhythmic ring.
Jubal sat lonely, all around was dim,
Yet his face glowed with light revealed to him:
For as the delicate stream of odor wakes
The thought-wed sentience and some image makes
From out the mingled fragments of the past,
Finely compact in wholeness that will last,
So streamed as from the body of each sound
Subtler pulsations, swift as warmth, which found
All prisoned germs and all their powers unbound,
Till thought self-luminous flamed from memory,
And in creative vision wandered free.
Then Jubal, standing, rapturous arms upraised,
And on the dark with eager eyes he gazed,
As had some manifested god been there.
It was his thought he saw: the presence fair
Of unachieved achievement, the high task,
The struggling unborn spirit that doth ask
With irresistible cry for blood and breath,
Till feeding its great life we sink in death.

He said, "Were now those mighty tones and cries
That from the giant soul of earth arise,
Those groans of some great travail heard from far,
Some power at wrestle with the things that are,
Those sounds which vary with the varying form
Of clay and metal, and in sightless swarm
Fill the wide space with tremors: were these wed
To human voices with such passion fed
As does but glimmer in our common speech,
But might flame out in tones whose changing reach,
Surpassing meagre need, informs the sense
With fuller union, finer difference —
Were this great vision, now obscurely bright
As morning hills that melt in new-poured light,
Wrought into solid form and living sound,
Moving with ordered throb and sure rebound,
Then — Nay, I Jubal will that work begin!
The generations of our race shall win
New life, that grows from out the heart of this,
As spring from winter, or as lovers' bliss
From out the dull unknown of unwoke energies."



"Then Jubal poured his triumph in a song."

Thus he resolved, and in the soul-fed light
Of coming ages waited through the night,
Watching for that near dawn whose chiller ray
Showed but the unchanged world of yesterday;
Where all the order of his dream divine
Lay like Olympian forms within the mine;
Where fervor that could fill the earthly round
With thronged joys of form-begotten sound
Must shrink intense within the patient power
That lonely labors through the niggard hour.
Such patience have the heroes who begin,
Sailing the first to lands which others win.
Jubal must dare as great beginners dare,
Strike form's first way in matter rude and bare,
And, yearning vaguely toward the plenteous quire
Of the world's harvest, make one poor small lyre.
He made it, and from out its measured frame
Drew the harmonic soul, whose answers came
With guidance sweet and lessons of delight
Teaching to ear and hand the blissful Right,
Where strictest law is gladness to the sense
And all desire bends toward obedience.

Then Jubal poured his triumph in a song —
The rapturous word that rapturous notes prolong
As radiance streams from smallest things that burn,
Or thought of loving into love doth turn.
And still his lyre gave companionship
In sense-taught concert as of lip with lip.
Alone amid the hills at first he tried
His winged song; then with adoring pride
And bridegroom's joy at leading forth his bride,
He said, "This wonder which my soul hath found,
This heart of music in the might of sound,
Shall forthwith be the share of all our race
And like the morning gladden common space:
The song shall spread and swell as rivers do,
And I will teach our youth with skill to woo
This living lyre, to know its secret will,
Its fine division of the good and ill.
So shall men call me sire of harmony,
And where great Song is, there my life shall be."

Thus glorying as a god beneficent,

Forth from his solitary joy he went
To bless mankind. It was at evening,
When shadows lengthen from each westward thing,
When imminence of change makes sense more fine
And light seems holier in its grand decline.
The fruit-trees wore their studded coronal,
Earth and her children were at festival,
Glowing as with one heart and one consent —
Thought, love, trees, rocks, in sweet warm radiance blent.

The tribe of Cain was resting on the ground,
The various ages wreathed in one broad round.
Here lay, while children peeped o'er his huge thighs,
The sinewy man embrowned by centuries ;
Here the broad-bosomed mother of the strong
Looked, like Demeter, placid o'er the throng
Of young lithe forms whose rest was movement too —
Tricks, prattle, nods, and laughs that lightly flew,
And swayings as of flower-beds where Love blew.
For all had feasted well upon the flesh
Of juicy fruits, on nuts, and honey fresh,
And now their wine was health-bred merriment,
Which through the generations circling went,
Leaving none sad, for even father Cain
Smiled as a Titan might, despising pain.
Jabal sat climbed on by a playful ring
Of children, lambs and whelps, whose gambolling.
With tiny hoofs, paws, hands, and dimpled feet,
Made barks, bleats, laughs, in pretty hubbub meet.
But Tubal's hammer rang from far away,
Tubal alone would keep no holiday,
His furnace must not slack for any feast,
For of all hardship work he counted least ;
He scorned all rest but sleep, where every dream
Made his repose more potent action seem.

Yet with health's nectar some strange thirst was blent,
The fateful growth, the unnamed discontent,
The inward shaping toward some unborn power,
Some deeper-breathing act, the being's flower.
After all gestures, words, and speech of eyes,
The soul had more to tell, and broke in sighs.
Then from the east, with glory on his head
Such as low-slanting beams on corn-waves spread,

Came Jubal with his lyre : there 'mid the throng,
Where the blank space was, poured a solemn song,
Touching his lyre to full harmonic throb
And measured pulse, with cadences that sob,
Exult and cry, and search the inmost deep
Where the dark sources of new passion sleep.
Joy took the air, and took each breathing soul,
Embracing them in one entranced whole,
Yet thrilled each varying frame to various ends,
As Spring new-waking through the creature sends
Or rage or tenderness ; more plenteous life
Here breeding dread, and there a fiercer strife.
He who had lived through twice three centuries,
Whose months monotonous, like trees on trees
In hoary forests, stretched a backward maze,
Dreamed himself dimly through the travelled days
Till in clear light he paused, and felt the sun
That warmed him when he was a little one ;
Felt that true heaven, the recovered past,
The dear small Known amid the Unknown vast,
And in that heaven wept. But younger limbs
Thrilled toward the future, that bright land which swims
In western glory, isles and streams and bays,
Where hidden pleasures float in golden haze.
And in all these the rhythmic influence,
Sweetly o'ercharging the delighted sense,
Flowed out in movements, little waves that spread
Enlarging, till in tidal union led
The youths and maidens both alike long-tressed,
By grace-inspiring melody possessed,
Rose in slow dance, with beauteous floating swerve
Of limbs and hair, and many a melting curve
Of ringed feet swayed by each close-linked palm :
Then Jubal poured more rapture in his psalm,
The dance fired music, music fired the dance,
The glow diffusive lit each countenance,
Till all the gazing elders rose and stood
With glad yet awful shock of that mysterious good.

Even Tubal caught the sound, and wondering came,
Urging his sooty bulk like smoke-wrapt flame
Till he could see his brother with the lyre,
The work for which he lent his furnace-fire
And diligent hammer, witting nought of this —

This power in metal shape which made strange bliss,
Entering within him like a dream full-fraught
With new creations finished in a thought.

The sun had sunk, but music still was there,
And when this ceased, still triumph filled the air :
It seemed the stars were shining with delight
And that no night was ever like this night.
All clung with praise to Jubal : some besought
That he would teach them his new skill ; some caught,
Swiftly as smiles are caught in looks that meet,
The tone's melodic change and rhythmic beat :
'T was easy following where invention trod —
All eyes can see when light flows out from God.

And thus did Jubal to his race reveal
Music their larger soul, where woe and weal
Filling the resonant chords, the song, the dance,
Moved with a wider-winged utterance.
Now many a lyre was fashioned, many a song
Raised echoes new, old echoes to prolong,
Till things of Jubal's making were so rife,
"Hearing myself," he said, "horns in my life,
And I will get me to some far-off land,
Where higher mountains under heaven stand
And touch the blue at rising of the stars,
Whose song they hear where no rough mingling mars
The great clear voices. Such lands there must be,
Where varying forms make varying symphony —
Where other thunders roll amid the hills,
Some mightier wind a mightier forest fills
With other strains through other-shapen boughs ;
Where bees and birds and beasts that hunt or browse
Will teach me songs I know not. Listening there,
My life shall grow like trees both tall and fair
That rise and spread and bloom toward fuller fruit each
year."

He took a raft, and travelled with the stream
Southward for many a league, till he might deem
He saw at last the pillars of the sky,
Beholding mountains whose white majesty
Rushed through him as new awe, and made new song
That swept with fuller wave the chords along,

Weighting his voice with deep religious chime,
The iteration of slow chant sublime.
It was the region long inhabited
By all the race of Seth; and Jubal said:
"Here have I found my thirsty soul's desire,
Eastward the hills touch heaven, and evening's fire
Flames through deep waters; I will take my rest,
And feed anew from my great mother's breast,
The sky-clasped Earth, whose voices nurture me
As the flowers' sweetness doth the honey-bee."
He lingered wandering for many an age,
And, sowing music, made high heritage
For generations far beyond the Flood —
For the poor late-begotten human brood
Born to life's weary brevity and perilous good.

And ever as he travelled he would climb
The farthest mountain, yet the heavenly chime,
The mighty tolling of the far-off spheres
Beating their pathway, never touched his ears.
But wheresoe'er he rose the heavens rose,
And the far-gazing mountain could disclose
Nought but a wider earth; until one height
Showed him the ocean stretched in liquid light,
And he could hear its multitudinous roar,
Its plunge and hiss upon the pebbled shore:
Then Jubal silent sat, and touched his lyre no more.

He thought, "The world is great, but I am weak,
And where the sky bends is no solid peak
To give me footing, but instead, this main —
Myriads of maddened horses thundering o'er the plain.

"New voices come to me where'er I roam,
My heart too widens with its widening home:
But song grows weaker, and the heart must break
For lack of voice, or fingers that can wake
The lyre's full answer; nay, its chords were all
Too few to meet the growing spirit's call.
The former songs seem little, yet no more
Can soul, hand, voice, with interchanging lore
Tell what the earth is saying unto me:
The secret is too great, I hear confusedly.

"No farther will I travel: once again
My brethren I will see, and that fair plain
Where I and Song were born. There fresh-voiced youth
Will pour my strains with all the early truth
Which now abides not in my voice and hands,
But only in the soul, the will that stands
Helpless to move. My tribe remembering
Will cry 'T is he!' and run to greet me, welcoming."

The way was weary. Many a date-palm grew,
And shook out clustered gold against the blue,
While Jubal, guided by the steadfast spheres,
Sought the dear home of those first eager years,
When, with fresh vision fed, the fuller will
Took living outward shape in pliant skill;
For still he hoped to find the former things,
And the warm gladness recognition brings.
His footsteps erred among the mazy woods
And long illusive sameness of the floods,
Winding and wandering. Through far regions, strange
With Gentile homes and faces, did he range,
And left his music in their memory,
And left at last, when nought besides would free
His homeward steps from clinging hands and cries,
The ancient lyre. And now in ignorant eyes
No sign remained of Jubal, Lamech's son,
That mortal frame wherein was first begun
The immortal life of song. His withered brow
Pressed over eyes that held no lightning now,
His locks streamed whiteness on the hurrying air,
The unresting soul had worn itself quite bare
Of beauteous token, as the outworn might
Of oaks slow dying, gaunt in summer's light.
His full deep voice toward thinnest treble ran:
He was the rune-writ story of a man.

And so at last he neared the well-known land,
Could see the hills in ancient order stand
With friendly faces whose familiar gaze
Looked through the sunshine of his childish days;
Knew the deep-shadowed folds of hanging woods,
And seemed to see the self-same insect broods
Whirling and quivering o'er the flowers — to hear
The self-same cuckoo making distance near.

Yea, the dear Earth, with mother's constancy,
Met and embraced him, and said, "Thou art he !
This was thy cradle, here my breast was thine,
Where feeding, thou didst all thy life entwine
With my sky-wedded life in heritage divine."

But wending ever through the watered plain,
Firm not to rest save in the home of Cain,
He saw dread Change, with dubious face and cold
That never kept a welcome for the old,
Like some strange heir upon the hearth, arise
Saying "This home is mine." He thought his eyes
Mocked all deep memories, as things new made,
Usurping sense, make old things shrink and fade
And seem ashamed to meet the staring day.
His memory saw a small foot-trodden way,
His eyes a broad far-stretching paven road
Bordered with many a tomb and fair abode ;
The little city that once nestled low
As buzzing groups about some central glow,
Spread like a murmuring crowd o'er plain and steep,
Or monster huge in heavy-breathing sleep.
His heart grew faint, and tremblingly he sank
Close by the wayside on a weed-grown bank,
Not far from where a new-raised temple stood,
Sky-roofed, and fragrant with wrought cedar wood.
The morning sun was high ; his rays fell hot
On this hap-chosen, dusty, common spot,
On the dry-withered grass and withered man
That wondrous frame where melody began
Lay as a tomb defaced that no eye cared to scan.

But while he sank far music reached his ear.
He listened until wonder silenced fear
And gladness wonder ; for the broadening stream
Of sound advancing was his early dream,
Brought like fulfilment of forgotten prayer ;
As if his soul, breathed out upon the air,
Had held the invisible seeds of harmony
Quick with the various strains of life to be.
He listened : the sweet mingled difference
With charm alternate took the meeting sense ;
Then bursting like some shield-broad lily red,
Sudden and near the trumpet's notes out-spread,

And soon his eyes could see the metal flower,
Shining upturned, out on the morning pour
Its incense audible ; could see a train
From out the street slow-winding on the plain
With lyres and cymbals, flutes and psalteries,
While men, youths, maids, in concert sang to these
With various throat, or in succession poured,
Or in full volume mingled. But one word
Ruled each recurrent rise and answering fall,
As when the multitudes adoring call
On some great name divine, their common soul,
The common need, love, joy, that knits them in one whole

The word was "Jubal!" . . . "Jubal" filled the air
And seemed to ride aloft, a spirit there,
Creator of the quire, the full-fraught strain
That grateful rolled itself to him again.
The aged man adust upon the bank —
Whom no eye saw — at first with rapture drank
The bliss of music, then, with swelling heart,
Felt, this was his own being's greater part,
The universal joy once born in him.
But when the train, with living face and limb
And vocal breath, came nearer and more near,
The longing grew that they should hold him dear ;
Him, Lamech's son, whom all their fathers knew,
The breathing Jubal, him, to whom their love was due.
All was forgotten but the burning need
To claim his fuller self, to claim the deed
That lived away from him, and grew apart,
While he as from a tomb, with lonely heart,
Warmed by no meeting glance, no hand that pressed,
Lay chill amid the life his life had blessed.
What though his song should spread from man's small race
Out through the myriad worlds that people space,
And make the heavens one joy-diffusing quire ? —
Still 'mid that vast would throb the keen desire
Of this poor aged flesh, this eventide,
This twilight soon in darkness to subside,
This little pulse of self that, having glowed
Through thrice three centuries, and divinely strowed
The light of music through the vague of sound,
Ached with its smallness still in good that had no
bound.

For no eye saw him, while with loving pride
Each voice with each in praise of Jubal vied.
Must he in conscious trance, dumb, helpless lie
While all that ardent kindred passed him by ?
His flesh cried out to live with living men
And join that soul which to the inward ken
Of all the hymning train was present there.
Strong passion's daring sees not aught to dare :
The frost-locked starkness of his frame low-bent,
His voice's penury of tones long spent,
He felt not ; all his being leaped in flame
To meet his kindred as they onward came
Slackening and wheeling toward the temple's face :
He rushed before them to the glittering space,
And, with a strength that was but strong desire,
Cried, " I am Jubal, I ! . . . I made the lyre ! "

The tones amid a lake of silence fell
Broken and strained, as if a feeble bell
Had tuneless pealed the triumph of a land
To listening crowds in expectation spanned.
Sudden came showers of laughter on that lake ;
They spread along the train from front to wake
In one great storm of merriment, while he
Shrank doubting whether he could Jubal be,
And not a dream of Jubal, whose rich vein
Of passionate music came with that dream-pain
Wherein the sense slips off from each loved thing
And all appearance is mere vanishing.
But ere the laughter died from out the rear,
Anger in front saw profanation near ;
Jubal was but a name in each man's faith
For glorious power untouched by that slow death
Which creeps with creeping time ; this too, the spot,
And this the day, it must be crime to blot,
Even with scoffing at a madman's lie :
Jubal was not a name to wed with mockery.

Two rushed upon him : two, the most devout
In honor of great Jubal, thrust him out,
And beat him with their flutes. 'T was little need ;
He strove not, cried not, but with tottering speed,
As if the scorn and howls were driving wind
That urged his body, serving so the mind

Which could but shrink and yearn, he sought the screen
Of thorny thickets, and there fell unseen.
The immortal name of Jubal filled the sky,
While Jubal lonely laid him down to die.
He said within his soul, "This is the end :
O'er all the earth to where the heavens bend
And hem men's travel, I have breathed my soul :
I lie here now the remnant of that whole,
The embers of a life, a lonely pain ;
As far-off rivers to my thirst were vain,
So of my mighty years nought comes to me again.

"Is the day sinking ? Softest coolness springs
From something round me : dewy shadowy wings
Enclose me all around — no, not above —
Is moonlight there ? I see a face of love,
Fair as sweet music when my heart was strong :
Yea — art thou come again to me, great Song ?"

The face bent over him like silver night
In long-remembered summers ; that calm light
Of days which shine in firmaments of thought,
That past unchangeable, from change still wrought.
And gentlest tones were with the vision blent :
He knew not if that gaze the music sent,
Or music that calm gaze : to hear, to see,
Was but one undivided ecstasy :
The raptured senses melted into one,
And parting life a moment's freedom won
From in and outer, as a little child
Sits on a bank and sees blue heavens mild
Down in the water, and forgets its limbs,
And knoweth nought save the blue heaven that swims.

"Jubal," the face said, "I am thy loved Past,
The soul that makes thee one from first to last.
I am the angel of thy life and death,
Thy outbreathed being drawing its last breath.
Am I not thine alone, a dear dead bride
Who blest thy lot above all men's beside ?
Thy bride whom thou wouldst never change, nor take
Any bride living, for that dead one's sake ?
Was I not all thy yearning and delight,
Thy chosen search, thy senses' beauteous Right,

Which still had been the hunger of thy frame
In central heaven, hadst thou been still the same ?
Wouldst thou have asked aught else from any god —
Whether with gleaming feet on earth he trod
Or thundered through the skies — aught else for share
Of mortal good, than in thy soul to bear
The growth of song, and feel the sweet unrest
Of the world's spring-tide in thy conscious breast ?
No, thou hadst grasped thy lot with all its pain,
Nor loosed it any painless lot to gain
Where music's voice was silent ; for thy fate
Was human music's self incorporate :
Thy senses' keenness and thy passionate strife
Were flesh of *her* flesh and her womb of life.
And greatly hast thou lived, for not alone
With hidden raptures were her secrets shown,
Buried within thee, as the purple light
Of gems may sleep in solitary night ;
But thy expanding joy was still to give,
And with the generous air in song to live,
Feeding the wave of ever-widening bliss
Where fellowship means equal perfectness.
And on the mountains in thy wandering
Thy feet were beautiful as blossomed spring,
That turns the leafless wood to love's glad home,
For with thy coming Melody was come.
This was thy lot, to feel, create, bestow,
And that immeasurable life to know
From which the fleshly self falls shrivelled, dead,
A seed primeval that has forests bred.
It is the glory of the heritage
Thy life has left, that makes thy outcast age :
Thy limbs shall lie dark, tombless on this sod,
Because thou shinest in man's soul, a god,
Who found and gave new passion and new joy
That nought but Earth's destruction can destroy.
Thy gifts to give was thine of men alone :
'T was but in giving that thou couldst atone
For too much wealth amid their poverty." —

The words seemed melting into symphony,
The wings upbore him, and the gazing song
Was floating him the heavenly space along,
Where mighty harmonies all gently fell

Through veiling vastness, like the far-off bell,
Till, ever onward through the choral blue,
He heard more faintly and more faintly knew,
Quitting mortality, a quenched sun-wave,
The All-creating Presence for his grave.

1869.

AGATHA.

COME with me to the mountain, not where rocks
Soar harsh above the troops of hurrying pines,
But where the earth spreads soft and rounded breasts
To feed her children ; where the generous hills
Lift a green isle betwixt the sky and plain
To keep some Old World things aloof from change.
Here too 't is hill and hollow : new-born streams
With sweet enforcement, joyously compelled
Like laughing children, hurry down the steeps,
And make a dimpled chase athwart the stones ;
Pine woods are black upon the heights, the slopes
Are green with pasture, and the bearded corn
Fringes the blue above the sudden ridge :
A little world whose round horizon cuts
This isle of hills with heaven for a sea,
Save in clear moments when southwestward gleams
France by the Rhine, melting anon to haze.
The monks of old chose here their still retreat,
And called it by the Blessed Virgin's name,
Sancta Maria, which the peasant's tongue,
Speaking from out the parent's heart that turns
All loved things into little things, has made
Sanct Märgen, — Holy little Mary, dear
As all the sweet home things she smiles upon,
The children and the cows, the apple-trees,
The cart, the plough, all named with that caress
Which feigns them little, easy to be held,
Familiar to the eyes and hand and heart.
What though a Queen ? She puts her crown away
And with her little Boy wears common clothes,
Caring for common wants, remembering

That day when good Saint Joseph left his work
To marry her with humble trust sublime.
The monks are gone, their shadows fall no more
Tall-frocked and cowed athwart the evening fields
At milking-time ; their silent corridors
Are turned to homes of bare-armed, aproned men,
Who toil for wife and children. But the bells,
Pealing on high from two quaint convent towers,
Still ring the Catholic signals, summoning
To grave remembrance of the larger life
That bears our own, like perishable fruit
Upon its heaven-wide branches. At their sound
The shepherd boy far off upon the hill,
The workers with the saw and at the forge,
The triple generation round the hearth, —
Grandames and mothers and the flute-voiced girls, —
Fall on their knees and send forth prayerful cries
To the kind Mother with the little Boy,
Who pleads for helpless men against the storm,
Lightning and plagues and all terrific shapes
Of power supreme.
Within the prettiest hollow of these hills,
Just as you enter it, upon the slope
Stands a low cottage neighbored cheerily
By running water, which, at farthest end
Of the same hollow, turns a heavy mill,
And feeds the pasture for the miller's cows,
Blanchi and Nägeli, Veilchen and the rest,
Matrons with faces as Griselda mild,
Coming at call. And on the farthest height
A little tower looks out above the pines
Where mounting you will find a sanctuary
Open and still ; without, the silent crowd
Of heaven-planted, incense-mingling flowers ;
Within, the altar where the Mother sits
'Mid votive tablets hung from far-off years
By peasants succored in the peril of fire,
Fever, or flood, who thought that Mary's love,
Willing but not omnipotent, had stood
Between their lives and that dread power which slew
Their neighbor at their side. The chapel bell
Will melt to gentlest music ere it reach
That cottage on the slope, whose garden gate
Has caught the rose-tree boughs and stands ajar ;

So does the door, to let the sunbeams in ;
For in the slanting sunbeams angels come
And visit Agatha who dwells within, —
Old Agatha, whose cousins Kate and Nell
Are housed by her in Love and Duty's name,
They being feeble, with small withered wits,
And she believing that the higher gift
Was given to be shared. So Agatha
Shares her one room, all neat on afternoons,
As if *some memory were sacred there*
And everything within the four low walls
An honored relic.

One long summer's day
An angel entered at the rose-hung gate,
With skirts pale blue, a brow to quench the pearl,
Hair soft and blonde as infants', plenteous
As hers who made the wavy lengths once speak
The grateful worship of a rescued soul.
The angel paused before the open door
To give good day. "Come in," said Agatha.
I followed close, and watched and listened there.
The angel was a lady, noble, young,
Taught in all seemliness that fits a court,
All lore that shapes the mind to delicate use,
Yet quiet, lowly, as a meek white dove
That with its presence teaches gentleness.
Men called her Countess Linda; little girls
In Freiburg town, orphans whom she caressed,
Said Mamma Linda: yet her years were few,
Her outward beauties all in budding time,
Her virtues the aroma of the plant
That dwells in all its being, root, stem, leaf,
And waits not ripeness.

"Sit," said Agatha.
Her cousins were at work in neighboring homes
But yet she was not lonely; all things round
Seemed filled with noiseless yet responsive life,
As of a child at breast that gently clings:
Not sunlight only or the breathing flowers
Or the swift shadows of the birds and bees,
But all the household goods, which, polished fair
By hands that cherished them for service done,
Shone as with glad content. The wooden beams
Dark and yet friendly, easy to be reached,

Bore three white crosses for a speaking sign ;
 The walls had little pictures hung a-row,
 Telling the stories of Saint Ursula,
 And Saint Elizabeth, the lowly queen ;
 And on the bench that served for table too,
 Skirting the wall to save the narrow space,
 There lay the Catholic books, inherited
 From those old times when printing still was young
 With stout-limbed promise, like a sturdy boy.
 And in the farthest corner stood the bed
 Where o'er the pillow hung two pictures wreathed
 With fresh-plucked ivy : one the Virgin's death,
 And one her flowering tomb, while high above
 She smiling bends and lets her girdle down
 For ladder to the soul that cannot trust
 In life which outlasts burial. Agatha
 Sat at her knitting, aged, upright, slim,
 And spoke her welcome with mild dignity.
 She kept the company of kings and queens
 And mitred saints who sat below the feet
 Of Francis with the ragged frock and wounds ;
 And Rank for her meant Duty, various,
 Yet equal in its worth, done worthily.
 Command was service ; humblest service done
 By willing and discerning souls was glory.
 Fair Countess Linda sat upon the bench,
 Close fronting the old knitter, and they talked
 With sweet antiphony of young and old.

AGATHA.

You like our valley, lady ? I am glad
 You thought it well to come again. But rest —
 The walk is long from Master Michael's inn.

COUNTESS LINDA.

Yes, but no walk is prettier.

AGATHA.

It is true :
 There lacks no blessing here, the waters all
 Have virtues like the garments of the Lord,

And heal much sickness ; then, the crops and cows
Flourish past speaking, and the garden flowers,
Pink, blue, and purple, 't is a joy to see
How they yield honey for the singing bees.
I would the whole world were as good a home.

COUNTESS LINDA.

And you are well off, Agatha ? — your friends
Left you a certain bread : is it not so ?

AGATHA.

Not so at all, dear lady. I had nought,
Was a poor orphan ; but I came to tend
Here in this house, an old afflicted pair,
Who wore out slowly ; and the last who died,
Full thirty years ago, left me this roof
And all the household stuff. It was great wealth ;
And so I had a home for Kate and Nell.

COUNTESS LINDA.

But how, then, have you earned your daily bread
These thirty years ?

AGATHA.

O, that is easy earning.
We help the neighbors, and our bit and sup
Is never failing : they have work for us
In house and field, all sorts of odds and ends,
Patching and mending, turning o'er the hay,
Holding sick children, — there is always work ;
And they are very good, — the neighbors are :
Weigh not our bits of work with weight and scale,
But glad themselves with giving us good shares
Of meat and drink ; and in the big farm-house
When cloth comes home from weaving, the good wife
Cuts me a piece, — this very gown, — and says :
“ Here, Agatha, you old maid, you have time
To pray for Hans who is gone soldiering :
The saints might help him, and they have much to do,
’T were well they were besought to think of him.”
She spoke half jesting, but I pray, I pray

For poor young Hans. I take it much to heart
That other people are worse off than I, —
I ease my soul with praying for them all.

COUNTESS LINDA.

That is your way of singing, Agatha ;
Just as the nightingales pour forth sad songs,
And when they reach men's ears they make men's heart
Feel the more kindly.

AGATHA.

Nay, I cannot sing :
My voice is hoarse, and oft I think my prayers
Are foolish, feeble things ; for Christ is good
Whether I pray or not, — the Virgin's heart
Is kinder far than mine ; and then I stop
And feel I can do nought towards helping men,
Till out it comes, like tears that will not hold,
And I must pray again for all the world.
'T is good to me, — I mean the neighbors are :
To Kate and Nell too. I have money saved
To go on pilgrimage the second time.

COUNTESS LINDA.

And do you mean to go on pilgrimage
With all your years to carry, Agatha ?

AGATHA.

The years are light, dear lady : 't is my sins
Are heavier than I would. And I shall go
All the way to Einsiedeln with that load :
I need to work it off.

COUNTESS LINDA.

What sort of sins,
Dear Agatha ? I think they must be small.

AGATHA.

Nay, but they may be greater than I know ;
'T is but dim light I see by. So I try
All ways I know of to be cleansed and pure.
I would not sink where evil spirits are.
There's perfect goodness somewhere : so I strive.

COUNTESS LINDA.

You were the better for that pilgrimage
You made before ? The shrine is beautiful ;
And then you saw fresh country all the way.

AGATHA.

Yes, that is true. And ever since that time
The world seems greater, and the Holy Church
More wonderful. The blessed pictures all,
The heavenly images with books and wings,
Are company to me through the day and night.
The time ! the time ! It never seemed far back,
Only to father's father and his kin
That lived before him. But the time stretched out
After that pilgrimage : I seemed to see
Far back, and yet I knew time lay behind,
As there are countries lying still behind
The highest mountains, there in Switzerland.
O, it is great to go on pilgrimage !

COUNTESS LINDA.

Perhaps some neighbors will be pilgrims too,
And you can start together in a band.

AGATHA.

Not from these hills : people are busy here,
The beasts want tendance. One who is not missed
Can go and pray for others who must work.
I owe it to all neighbors, young and old ;
For they are good past thinking, — lads and girls

Given to mischief, merry naughtiness,
Quiet it, as the hedgehogs smooth their spines,
For fear of hurting poor old Agatha.
'Tis pretty : why, the cherubs in the sky
Look young and merry, and the angels play
On citherns, lutes, and all sweet instruments.
I would have young things merry. See the Lord !
A little baby playing with the birds ;
And how the Blessed Mother smiles at him.

COUNTESS LINDA.

I think you are too happy, Agatha,
To care for heaven. Earth contents you well.

AGATHA.

Nay, nay, I shall be called, and I shall go
Right willingly. I shall get helpless, blind,
Be like an old stalk to be plucked away :
The garden must be cleared for young spring plants.
'Tis home beyond the grave, the most are there,
All those we pray to, all the Church's lights, —
And poor old souls are welcome in their rags :
One sees it by the pictures. Good Saint Ann,
The Virgin's mother, she is very old,
And had her troubles with her husband too.
Poor Kate and Nell are younger far than I,
But they will have this roof to cover them.
I shall go willingly ; and willingness
Makes the yoke easy and the burden light.

COUNTESS LINDA.

When you go southward in your pilgrimage,
Come to see me in Freiburg, Agatha.
Where you have friends you should not go to inns.

AGATHA.

Yes, I will gladly come to see you, lady.
And you will give me sweet hay for a bed,
And in the morning I shall wake betimes
And start when all the birds begin to sing.

COUNTESS LINDA.

You wear your smart clothes on the pilgrimage,
Such pretty clothes as all the women here
Keep by them for their best: a velvet cap
And collar golden-broidered? They look well
On old and young alike.

AGATHA.

Nay, I have none, —
Never had better clothes than these you see.
Good clothes are pretty, but one sees them best
When others wear them, and I somehow thought
'T was not worth while. I had so many things
More than some neighbors, I was partly shy
Of wearing better clothes than they, and now
I am so old and custom is so strong
'T would hurt me sore to put on finery.

COUNTESS LINDA.

Your gray hair is a crown, dear Agatha.
Shake hands; good-bye. The sun is going down,
And I must see the glory from the hill.

I stayed among those hills; and oft heard more
Of Agatha. I liked to hear her name,
As that of one half grandame and half saint,
Uttered with reverent playfulness. The lads
And younger men all called her mother, aunt,
Or granny, with their pet diminutives,
And bade their lasses and their brides behave
Right well to one who surely made a link
'Twixt faulty folk and God by loving both:
Not one but counted service done by her,
Asking no pay save just her daily bread.
At feasts and weddings, when they passed in groups
Along the vale, and the good country wine,
Being vocal in them, made them quire along
In quaintly mingled mirth and piety,
They fain must jest and play some friendly trick
On three old maids; but when the moment came
Always they baited breath and made their sport
Gentle as feather-stroke, that Agatha

Might like the waking for the love it showed.
Their song made happy music 'mid the hills,
For nature tuned their race to harmony,
And poet Hans, the tailor, wrote them songs
That grew from out their life, as crocuses
From out the meadow's moistness. 'T was his song
They oft sang, wending homeward from a feast, —
The song I give you. It brings in, you see,
Their gentle jesting with the three old maids.

Midnight by the chapel bell !
Homeward, homeward all, farewell !
I with you, and you with me,
Miles are short with company.

*Heart of Mary, bless the way,
Keep us all by night and day !*

Moon and stars at feast with night
Now have drunk their fill of light.
Home they hurry, making time
Trot apace, like merry rhyme.

*Heart of Mary, mystic rose,
Send us all a sweet repose !*

Swiftly through the wood down hill,
Run till you can hear the mill.
Toni's ghost is wandering now,
Shaped just like a snow-white cow.

*Heart of Mary, morning star,
Ward off danger, near or far !*

Toni's wagon with its load
Fell and crushed him in the road
'Twixt these pine-trees. Never fear !
Give a neighbor's ghost good cheer.

*Holy Babe, our God and Brother,
Bind us fast to one another !*

Hark ! the mill is at its work,
Now we pass beyond the murk
To the hollow, where the moon
Makes her silvery afternoon.

*Good Saint Joseph, faithful spouse,
Help us all to keep our vows !*

Here the three old maidens dwell,
Agatha and Kate and Nell;
See, the moon shines on the thatch,
We will go and shake the latch.

*Heart of Mary, cup of joy,
Give us mirth without alloy!*

Hush, 't is here, no noise, sing low,
Rap with gentle knuckles — so!
Like the little tapping birds,
On the door; then sing good words.

*Meek Saint Anna, old and fair,
Hallow all the snow-white hair!*

Little maidens old, sweet dreams!
Sleep one sleep till morning beams.
Mothers ye, who help us all,
Quick at hand, if ill befall.

*Holy Gabriel, lily-laden,
Bless the aged mother-maiden!*

Forward, mount the broad hillside
Swift as soldiers when they ride.
See the two towers how they peep,
Round-capped giants, o'er the steep.

*Heart of Mary, by thy sorrow,
Keep us upright through the morrow!*

Now they rise quite suddenly
Like a man from bended knee,
Now Saint Märgen is in sight,
Here the roads branch off — good night!

*Heart of Mary, by thy grace,
Give us with the saints a place!*

ARMGART.

SCENE I.

A Salon lit with lamps and ornamented with green plants. An open piano, with many scattered sheets of music. Bronze busts of Beethoven and Gluck on pillars opposite each other. A small table spread with supper. FRÄULEIN WALPURGA, who advances with a slight lameness of gait from an adjoining room, enters GRAF DOBERG at the opposite door in a travelling dress.

GRAF.

Good morning, Fräulein !

WALPURGA.

What, so soon returned ?
I feared your mission kept you still at Prague.

GRAF.

But now arrived ! You see my travelling dress.
I hurried from the panting, roaring steam
Like any courier of embassy
Who hides the fiends of war within his bag.

WALPURGA.

You know that Armgart sings to-night ?

GRAF.

Has sung !
'T is close on half-past nine. The *Orpheus*

Lasts not so long. Her spirits — were they high ?
Was Leo confident ?

WALPURGA.

He only feared
Some tameness at beginning. Let the house
Once ring, he said, with plaudits, she is safe.

GRAF.

And Armgart ?

WALPURGA.

She was stiller than her wont.
But once, at some such trivial word of mine,
As that the highest prize might yet be won
By her who took the second — she was roused.
“For me,” she said, “I triumph or I fail.
I never strove for any second prize.”

GRAF.

Poor human-hearted singing-bird ! She bears
Cæsar’s ambition in her delicate breast,
And nought to still it with but quivering song !

WALPURGA.

I had not for the world been there to-night :
Unreasonable dread oft chills me more
Than any reasonable hope can warm.

GRAF.

You have a rare affection for your cousin ;
As tender as a sister’s.

WALPURGA.

Nay, I fear
My love is little more than what I felt
For happy stories when I was a child.
She fills my life that would be empty else,
And lifts my nought to value by her side.

GRAF.

She is reason good enough, or seems to be,
Why all were born whose being ministers
To her completeness. Is it most her voice
Subdues us? or her instinct exquisite,
Informing each old strain with some new grace
Which takes our sense like any natural good?
Or most her spiritual energy
That sweeps us in the current of her song?

WALPURGA.

I know not. Loosing either, we should lose
That whole we call our Armgart. For herself,
She often wonders what her life had been
Without that voice for channel to her soul.
She says, it must have leaped through all her limbs —
Made her a Mænad — made her snatch a brand
And fire some forest, that her rage might mount
In crashing roaring flames through half a land,
Leaving her still and patient for a while.
“Poor wretch!” she says, of any murderess —
“The world was cruel, and she could not sing:
I carry my revenges in my throat;
I love in singing, and am loved again.”

GRAF.

Mere mood! I cannot yet believe it more.
Too much ambition has unwomaned her;
But only for a while. Her nature hides
One half its treasures by its very wealth,
Taxing the hours to show it.

WALPURGA.

Hark! she comes.

*Enter LEO with a wreath in his hand, holding the door open
for ARMGART, who wears a furred mantle and hood. She
is followed by her maid, carrying an armful of bouquets.*

LEO.

Place for the queen of song !

GRAF (*advancing towards ARMGART, who throws off her hood and mantle, and shows a star of brilliants in her hair*).

A triumph, then.

You will not be a niggard of your joy
And chide the eagerness that came to share it.

ARMGART.

O kind ! you hastened your return for me.
I would you had been there to hear me sing !
Walpurga, kiss me : never tremble more
Lest Armgart's wing should fail her. She has found
This night the region where her rapture breathes —
Pouring her passion on the air made live
With human heart-throbs. Tell them, Leo, tell them
How I outsang your hope and made you cry
Because Gluck could not hear me. That was folly !
He sang, not listened : every linkèd note
Was his immortal pulse that stirred in mine,
And all my gladness is but part of him.
Give me the wreath.

[*She crowns the bust of GLUCK*

LEO (*sardonically*).

Ay, ay, but mark you this :

It was not part of him — that trill you made
In spite of me and reason !

ARMGART.

You were wrong —

Dear Leo, you were wrong : the house was held
As if a storm were listening with delight
And hushed its thunder.

LEO.

Will you ask the house
To teach you singing? Quit your *Orpheus* then,
And sing in farces grown to operas,
Where all the prurience of the full-fed mob
Is tickled with melodic impudence:
Jerk forth burlesque bravuras, square your arms
Akimbo with a tavern wench's grace,
And set the splendid compass of your voice
To lyric jigs. Go to! I thought you meant
To be an artist — lift your audience
To see your vision, not trick forth a show
To please the grossest taste of grossest numbers.

ARMGART (*taking up LEO's hand, and kissing it*).

Pardon, good Leo, I am penitent.
I will do penance: sing a hundred trills
Into a deep-dug grave, then burying them
As one did Midas' secret, rid myself
Of naughty exultation. O I trilled
At nature's prompting, like the nightingales.
Go scold them, dearest Leo.

LEO.

I stop my ears.
Nature in Gluck inspiring *Orpheus*,
Has done with nightingales. Are bird-beaks lips?

GRAF.

Truce to rebukes! Tell us — who were not there —
The double drama: how the expectant house
Took the first notes.

WALPURGA (*turning from her occupation of decking the
room with the flowers*).

Yes, tell us all, dear Armgart.
Did you feel tremors? Leo, how did she look?
Was there a cheer to greet her?

LEO.

Not a sound.

She walked like Orpheus in his solitude,
And seemed to see nought but what no man saw.
'T was famous. Not the Schroeder-Devrient
Had done it better. But your blessed public
Had never any judgment in cold blood —
Thinks all perhaps were better otherwise,
Till rapture brings a reason.

ARMGART (*scornfully*).

I knew that!

The woman whispered, "Not a pretty face!"
The men, "Well, well, a goodly length of limb:
She bears the chiton."—It were all the same
Were I the Virgin Mother and my stage
The opening heavens at the Judgment-day:
Gossips would peep, jog elbows, rate the price
Of such a woman in the social mart.
What were the drama of the world to them,
Unless they felt the hell-prong?

LEO.

Peace, now, peace!

I hate my phrases to be smothered o'er
With sauce of paraphrase, my sober tune
Made bass to rambling trebles, showering down
In endless demi-semi-quavers.

ARMGART (*taking a bon-bon from the table, uplifting
it before putting it into her mouth, and turning
away*).

Mum!

GRAF.

Yes, tell us all the glory, leave the blame.

WALPURGA.

ou first, dear Leo — what you saw and heard;
Then Armgart — she must tell us what she felt.

LEO.

Well! The first notes came clearly firmly forth.
And I was easy, for behind those rills
I knew there was a fountain. I could see
The house was breathing gently, heads were still;
Parrot opinion was struck meekly mute,
And human hearts were swelling. Armgart
stood

As if she had been new-created there
And found her voice which found a melody.
The minx! Gluck had not written, nor I taught:
Orpheus was Armgart, Armgart Orpheus.
Well, well, all through the *scena* I could feel
The silence tremble now, now poise itself
With added weight of feeling, till at last
Delight o'er-toppled it. The final note
Had happy drowning in the unloosed roar
That surged and ebbed and ever surged again,
Till expectation kept it pent awhile
Ere Orpheus returned. Pfui! He was changed:
My demi-god was pale, had downcast eyes
That quivered like a bride's who fain would send
Backward the rising tear.

ARMGART (*advancing, but then turning away, as if to
check her speech*).

I was a bride

As nuns are at their spousals.

LEO.

Ay, my lady,
That moment will not come again: applause
May come and plenty; but the first, first draught!
(*Snaps his fingers.*)

Music has sounds for it — I know no words.
I felt it once myself when they performed
My overture to Sintram. Well! 't is strange,
We know not pain from pleasure in such joy.

ARMGART (*turning quickly*).

Oh, pleasure has cramped dwelling in our souls,

And when full Being comes must call on pain
To lend it liberal space.

WALPURGA.

I hope the house
Kept a reserve of plaudits : I am jealous
Lest they had dulled themselves for coming good
That should have seemed the better and the best.

LEO.

No, 't was a revel where they had but quaffed
Their opening cup. I thank the artist's star,
His audience keeps not sober : once afire,
They flame towards climax, though his merit hold
But fairly even.

ARMGART (*her hand on LEO's arm*).

Now, now, confess the truth :
I sang still better to the very end —
All save the trill ; I give that up to you,
To bite and growl at. Why, you said yourself,
Each time I sang, it seemed new doors were oped
That you might hear heaven clearer.

LEO (*shaking his finger*).

I was raving.

ARMGART.

I am not glad with that mean vanity
Which knows no good beyond its appetite
Full feasting upon praise ! I am only glad,
Being praised for what I know is worth the praise ;
Glad of the proof that I myself have part
In what I worship ! At the last applause —
Seeming a roar of tropic winds that tossed
The handkerchiefs and many-colored flowers,
Falling like shattered rainbows all around —
Think you I felt myself a *prima donna* ?
No, but a happy spiritual star
Such as old Dante saw, wrought in a rose
Of light in Paradise, whose only self

Was consciousness of glory wide-diffused,
Music, life, power — I moving in the midst
With a sublime necessity of good.

LEO (*with a shrug*).

I thought it was a *prima donna* came
Within the side-scenes; ay, and she was proud
To find the bouquet from the royal box
Enclosed a jewel-case, and proud to wear
A star of brilliants, quite an earthly star,
Valued by thalers. Come, my lady, own
Ambition has five senses, and a self
That gives it good warm lodging when it sinks
Plump down from ecstasy.

ARMGART.

Own it? why not?
Am I a sage whose words must fall like seed
Silently buried toward a far-off spring?
I sing to living men and my effect
Is like the summer's sun, that ripens corn
Or now or never. If the world brings me gifts,
Gold, incense, myrrh — 't will be the needful sign
That I have stirred it as the high year stirs
Before I sink to winter.

GRAF.

Ecstasies

Are short — most happily! We should but lose
Were Armgart borne too commonly and long
Out of the self that charms us. Could I choose,
She were less apt to soar beyond the reach
Of woman's foibles, innocent vanities,
Fondness for trifles like that pretty star
Twinkling beside her cloud of ebon hair.

ARMGART (*taking out the gem and looking at it*).

This little star! I would it were the seed
Of a whole Milky Way, if such bright shimmer
Were the sole speech men told their rapture with

At Armgart's music. Shall I turn aside
 From splendors which flash out the glow I make,
 And live to make, in all the chosen breasts
 Of half a Continent? No, may it come,
 That splendor! May the day be near when men
 Think much to let my horses draw me home,
 And new lands welcome me upon their beach,
 Loving me for my fame. That is the truth
 Of what I wish, nay, yearn for. Shall I lie?
 Pretend to seek obscurity — to sing
 In hope of disregard? A vile pretence!
 And blasphemy besides. For what is fame
 But the benignant strength of One, transformed
 To joy of Many? Tributes, plaudits come
 As necessary breathing of such joy;
 And may they come to me!

GRAF.

The auguries
 Point clearly that way. Is it no offence
 To wish the eagle's wing may find repose,
 As feebler wings do, in a quiet nest?
 Or has the taste of fame already turned
 The Woman to a Muse. . .

LEO (*going to the table*).

Who needs no supper.
 I am her priest, ready to eat her share
 Of good Walpurga's offerings.

WALPURGA.

Armgart, come.

Graf, will you come?

GRAF.

Thanks, I play truant here,
 And must retrieve my self-indulged delay.
 But will the Muse receive a votary
 At any hour to-morrow?

ARMGART.

Any hour
After rehearsal, after twelve at noon.

SCENE II.

The same Salon, morning. ARMGART seated, in her bonnet and walking dress. The GRAF standing near her against the piano.

GRAF.

Armgart, to many minds the first success
Is reason for desisting. I have known
A man so versatile, he tried all arts,
But when in each by turns he had achieved
Just so much mastery as made men say,
"He could be king here if he would," he threw
The lauded skill aside. He hates, said one,
The level of achieved pre-eminence,
He must be conquering still; but others said —

ARMGART.

The truth, I hope: he had a meagre soul,
Holding no depth where love could root itself.
"Could if he would?" True greatness ever wills —
It lives in wholeness if it live at all,
And all its strength is knit with constancy.

GRAF.

He used to say himself he was too sane
To give his life away for excellence
Which yet must stand, an ivory statuette
Wrought to perfection through long lonely years,
Huddled in the mart of mediocrities.
He said, the very finest doing wins
The admiring only; but to leave undone,

Promise and not fulfil, like buried youth,
Wins all the envious, makes them sigh your name
As that fair Absent, blameless Possible,
Which could alone impassion them; and thus,
Serene negation has free gift of all,
Panting achievement struggles, is denied.
Or wins to lose again. What say you, Armgart?
Truth has rough flavors if we bite it through;
I think this sarcasm came from out its core.
Of bitter irony.

ARMGART.

It is the truth
Mean souls select to feed upon. What then?
Their meanness is a truth, which I will spurn.
The praise I seek lives not in envious breath
Using my name to blight another's deed.
I sing for love of song and that renown
Which is the spreading act, the world-wide share,
Of good that I was born with. Had I failed —
Well, that had been a truth most pitiable.
I cannot bear to think what life would be
With high hope shrunk to endurance, stunted aims
Like broken lances ground to eating-knives,
A self sunk down to look with level eyes
At low achievement, doomed from day to day
To distaste of its consciousness. But I —

GRAF.

Have won, not lost, in your decisive throw.
And I too glory in this issue; yet,
The public verdict has no potency
To sway my judgment of what Armgart is:
My pure delight in her would be but sullied,
If it o'erflowed with mixture of men's praise.
And had she failed, I should have said, "The pearl
Remains a pearl for me, reflects the light
With the same fitness that first charmed my gaze —
Is worth as fine a setting now as then."

ARMGART (*rising*).

Oh, you are good! But why will you rehearse
The talk of cynics, who with insect eyes

Explore the secrets of the rubbish-heap ?
I hate your epigrams and pointed saws
Whose narrow truth is but broad falsity.
Confess your friend was shallow.

GRAF.

I confess

Life is not rounded in an epigram,
And saying aught, we leave a world unsaid.
I quoted, merely to shape forth my thought
That high success has terrors when achieved —
Like preternatural spouses whose dire love
Hangs perilous on slight observances :
Whence it were possible that Armgart crowned
Might turn and listen to a pleading voice,
Though Armgart striving in the race was deaf.
You said you dared not think what life had been
Without the stamp of eminence ; have you thought
How you will bear the poise of eminence
With dread of sliding ? Paint the future out
As an unchecked and glorious career,
'T will grow more strenuous by the very love
You bear to excellence, the very fate
Of human powers, which tread at every step
On possible verges.

ARMGART.

I accept the peril.

I choose to walk high with sublimer dread
Rather than crawl in safety. And, besides,
I am an artist as you are a noble :
I ought to bear the burden of my rank.

GRAF.

Such parallels, dear Armgart, are but snares
To catch the mind with seeming argument —
Small baits of likeness 'mid disparity.
Men rise the higher as their task is high,
The task being well achieved. A woman's rank
Lies in the fulness of her womanhood :
Therein alone she is royal.

ARMGART.

Yes, I know
The oft-taught Gospel : " Woman, thy desire
Shall be that all superlatives on earth
Belong to men, save the one highest kind —
To be a mother. Thou shalt not desire
To do aught best save pure subservience :
Nature has willed it so ! " O blessed Nature !
Let her be arbitress ; she gave me voice
Such as she only gives a woman child,
Best of its kind, gave me ambition too,
That sense transcendent which can taste the joy
Of swaying multitudes, of being adored
For such achievement, needed excellence,
As man's best art must wait for, or be dumb.
Men did not say, when I had sung last night,
" 'T was good, nay, wonderful, considering
She is a woman " — and then to add,
" Tenor or baritone had sung her songs
Better, of course : she's but a woman spoiled " —
I beg your pardon, Graf, you said it.

GRAF.

No !
How should I say it, Armgart ? I who own
The magic of your nature-given art
As sweetest effluence of your womanhood
Which, being to my choice the best, must find
The best of utterance. But this I say :
Your fervid youth beguiles you ; you mistake
A strain of lyric passion for a life
Which in the spending is a chronicle
With ugly pages. Trust me, Armgart, trust me ;
Ambition exquisite as yours which soars
Toward something quintessential you call fame,
Is not robust enough for this gross world
Whose fame is dense with false and foolish breath.
Ardor, a-twin with nice refining thought,
Prepares a double pain. Pain had been saved,
Nay, purer glory reached, had you been throned
As woman only, holding all your art
As attribute to that dear sovereignty —

Concentering your power in home delights
Which penetrate and purify the world.

ARMGART.

What! leave the opera with my part ill-sung
While I was warbling in a drawing-room?
Sing in the chimney-corner to inspire
My husband reading news? Let the world hear
My music only in his morning speech
Less stammering than most honorable men's?
No, tell me that my song is poor, my art
The piteous feat of weakness aping strength —
That were fit proem to your argument.
Till then, I am an artist by my birth —
By the same warrant that I am a woman:
Nay, in the added rarer gift I see
Supreme vocation: if a conflict comes,
Perish — no, not the woman, but the joys
Which men make narrow by their narrowness.
Oh, I am happy! The great masters write
For women's voices, and great Music wants me!
I need not crush myself within a mould
Of theory called Nature: I have room
To breathe and grow unstunted.

GRAF.

Armgart, hear me.

I meant not that our talk should hurry on
To such collision. Foresight of the ills
Thick shadowing your path, drew on my speech
Beyond intention. True, I came to ask
A great renunciation, but not this
Towards which my words at first perversely strayed
As if in memory of their earlier suit,
Forgetful
Armgart, do you remember too? the suit
Had but postponement, was not quite disdained —
Was told to wait and learn — what it has learned —
A more submissive speech.

ARMGART (*with some agitation*).

Then it forgot
Its lesson cruelly. As I remember,

'T was not to speak save to the artist crowned,
Nor speak to her of casting off her crown.

GRAF.

Nor will it, Armgart. I come not to seek
Any renunciation save the wife's,
Which turns away from other possible love
Future and worthier, to take his love
Who asks the name of husband. He who sought
Armgart obscure, and heard her answer, "Wait" —
May come without suspicion now to seek
Armgart applauded.

ARMGART (*turning towards him*).

Yes, without suspicion
Of aught save what consists with faithfulness
In all expressed intent. Forgive me, Graf —
I am ungrateful to no soul that loves me —
To you most grateful. Yet the best intent
Grasps but a living present which may grow
Like any unfledged bird. You are a noble,
And have a high career; just now you said
'T was higher far than aught a woman seeks
Beyond mere womanhood. You claim to be
More than a husband, but could not rejoice
That I were more than wife. What follows, then?
You choosing me with much persistency
As is but stretched-out rashness, soon must find
Our marriage asks concessions, asks resolve
To share renunciation or demand it.
Either we both renounce a mutual ease,
As in a nation's need both man and wife
Do public services, or one of us
Must yield that something else for which each lives
Besides the other. Men are reasoners:
That premiss of superior claims perforce
Urges conclusion — "Armgart, it is you."

GRAF.

But if I say I have considered this
With strict prevision, counted all the cost

ARMGART.

You are bitter, Graf.
Forgive me ; seek the woman you deserve,
All grace, all good, who has not yet found
A meaning in her life, nor any end
Beyond fulfilling yours. The type abounds.

GRAF.

And happily, for the world.

ARMGART.

Yes, happily.
Let it excuse me that my kind is rare :
Commonness is its own security.

GRAF.

Armgart, I would with all my soul I knew
The man so rare that he could make your life
As woman sweet to you, as artist safe.

ARMGART.

Oh, I can live unmated, but not live
Without the bliss of singing to the world,
And feeling all my world respond to me.

GRAF.

May it be lasting. Then, we two must part ?

ARMGART.

I thank you from my heart for all. Farewell !

SCENE III.

A YEAR LATER.

The same Salon. WALPURGA is standing looking towards the window with an air of uneasiness. DOCTOR GRAHN.

DOCTOR.

Where is my patient, Fräulein ?

WALPURGA.

Fled ! escaped !

Gone to rehearsal. Is it dangerous ?

DOCTOR.

No, no ; her throat is cured. I only came
To hear her try her voice. Had she yet sung.

WALPURGA.

No ; she had meant to wait for you. She said,
"The Doctor has a right to my first song."
Her gratitude was full of little plans,
But all were swept away like gathered flowers
By sudden storm. She saw this opera bill —
It was a wasp to sting her : she turned pale,
Snatched up her hat and mufflers, said in haste,
"I go to Leo — to rehearsal — none
Shall sing *Fidelio* to-night but me !"
Then rushed down-stairs.

DOCTOR (*looking at his watch*).

And this, not long ago ?

WALPURGA.

Barely an hour.

DOCTOR.

I will come again,
Returning from Charlottenburg at one.

WALPURGA.

Doctor, I feel a strange presentiment.
Are you quite easy ?

DOCTOR.

She can take no harm.
'T was time for her to sing : her throat is well.
It was a fierce attack, and dangerous ;
I had to use strong remedies, but — well !
At one, dear Fräulein, we shall meet again.

SCENE IV.

TWO HOURS LATER.

WALPURGA starts up, looking towards the door. ARMGART enters, followed by LEO. She throws herself on a chair which stands with its back towards the door, speechless, not seeming to see anything. WALPURGA casts a questioning terrified look at LEO. He shrugs his shoulders, and lifts up his hands behind ARMGART, who sits like a helpless image, while WALPURGA takes off her hat and mantle.

WALPURGA.

Armgar, dear Armgar (*kneeling and taking her hands*),
only speak to me,
Your poor Walpurga. Oh, your hands are cold.
Clasp mine, and warm them ! I will kiss them warm.

(ARMGART looks at her an instant, then draws away her hands and, turning aside, buries her face against the back of the chair, WALPURGA rising and standing near.)

(DOCTOR GRAHN enters.)

DOCTOR.

News! stirring news to-day! wonders come thick.

ARMGART (*starting up at the first sound of his voice, and speaking vehemently*).

Yes, thick, thick, thick! and you have murdered it!
Murdered my voice — poisoned the soul in me,
And kept me living.
You never told me that your cruel cures
Were clogging films — a mouldy, dead'ning blight —
A lava-mud to crust and bury me,
Yet hold me living in a deep, deep tomb,
Crying unheard for ever! Oh, your cures
Are devil's triumphs: you can rob, maim, slay,
And keep a hell on the other side your cure
Where you can see your victim quivering
Between the teeth of torture — see a soul
Made keen by loss — all anguish with a good
Once known and gone! (*Turns and sinks back on her chair.*)

O misery, misery!
You might have killed me, might have let me sleep
After my happy day and wake — not here!
In some new unremembered world, — not here,
Where all is faded, flat — a feast broke off —
Banners all meaningless — exulting words
Dull, dull — a drum that lingers in the air
Beating to melody which no man hears.

DOCTOR (*after a moment's silence*).

A sudden check has shaken you, poor child!
All things seem livid, tottering to your sense,
From inward tumult. Stricken by a threat
You see your terrors only. Tell me, Leo:
'Tis not such utter loss.

(*LEO, with a shrug, goes quietly out.*)

The freshest bloom
Merely, has left the fruit; the fruit itself . . .

ARMGART.

Is ruined, withered, is a thing to hide
Away from scorn or pity. Oh, you stand
And look compassionate now, but when Death came
With mercy in his hands, you hindered him.
I did not choose to live and have your pity.
You never told me, never gave me choice
To die a singer, lightning-struck, unmaimed,
Or live what you would make me with your cures —
A self accursed with consciousness of change,
A mind that lives in nought but members lopped,
A power turned to pain — as meaningless
As letters fallen asunder that once made
A hymn of rapture. Oh, I had meaning once,
Like day and sweetest air. What am I now?
The millionth woman in superfluous herds.
Why should I be, do, think? 'Tis thistle-seed,
That grows and grows to feed the rubbish-heap.
Leave me alone!

DOCTOR.

Well, I will come again;
Send for me when you will, though but to rate me.
That is medicinal — a letting blood.

ARMGART.

Oh, there is one physician, only one,
Who cures and never spoils. Him I shall send for;
He comes readily.

DOCTOR (*to WALPURGA*).

One word, dear Fräulein.

SCENE V.

ARMGART, WALPURGA.

ARMGART.

Walpurga, have you walked this morning?

WALPURGA.

No.

ARMGART.

Go, then, and walk; I wish to be alone.

WALPURGA.

I will not leave you.

ARMGART.

Will not, at my wish?

WALPURGA.

Will not, because you wish it. Say no more,
But take this draught.

ARMGART.

The Doctor gave it you?

It is an anodyne. Put it away.
He cured me of my voice, and now he wants
To cure me of my vision and resolve—
Drug me to sleep that I may wake again
Without a purpose, abject as the rest
To bear the yoke of life. He shall not cheat me
Of that fresh strength which anguish gives the soul,
The inspiration of revolt, ere rage
Slackens to faltering. Now I see the truth.

WALPURGA (*setting down the glass*).

Then you must see a future in your reach,

With happiness enough to make a dower
For two of modest claims.

ARMGART.

Oh, you intone
That chant of consolation wherewith ease
Makes itself easier in the sight of pain.

WALPURGA.

No ; I would not console you, but rebuke.

ARMGART.

That is more bearable. Forgive me, dear.
Say what you will. But now I want to write.
(She rises and moves towards a table.)

WALPURGA.

I say then, you are simply fevered, mad ;
You cry aloud at horrors that would vanish
If you would change the light, throw into shade
The loss you aggrandize, and let day fall
On good remaining, nay on good refused
Which may be gain now. Did you not reject
A woman's lot more brilliant, as some held,
Than any singer's ? It may still be yours,
Graf Dornberg loved you well.

ARMGART.

Not me, not me.
He loved one well who was like me in all
Save in a voice which made that All unlike
As diamond is to charcoal. Oh, a man's love !
Think you he loves a woman's inner self
Aching with loss of loveliness ? — as mothers
Cleave to the palpitating pain that dwells
Within their misformed offspring ?

WALPURGA.

But the Graf
Chose you as simple Armgart — had preferred

That you should never seek for any fame
But such as matrons have who rear great sons.
And therefore you rejected him ; but now —

ARMGART.

Ay, now — now he would see me as I am,
(*She takes up a hand-mirror.*)
Russet and songless as a missel-thrush.
An ordinary girl — a plain brown girl,
Who, if some meaning flash from out her words,
Shocks as a disproportioned thing — a Will
That, like an arm astretch and broken off,
Has nought to hurl — the torso of a soul.
I sang him into love of me : my song
Was consecration, lifted me apart
From the crowd chiselled like me, sister forms,
But empty of divineness. Nay, my charm
Was half that I could win fame yet renounce !
A wife with glory possible absorbed
Into her husband's actual.

WALPURGA.

For shame !
Armgart, you slander him. What would you say
If now he came to you and asked again
That you would be his wife ?

ARMGART.

No, and thrice no !
It would be pitying constancy, not love,
That brought him to me now. I will not be
A pensioner in marriage. Sacraments
Are not to feed the paupers of the world.
If he were generous — I am generous too.

WALPURGA.

Proud, Armgart, but not generous.

A letter — from the Graf.

ARMGART.

Then open it.

(WALPURGA *still offers it.*)

Nay, my head swims. Read it. I cannot see.

(WALPURGA *opens it, reads and pauses.*)

Read it. Have done! No matter what it is.

WALPURGA (*reads in a low, hesitating voice.*)

"I am deeply moved — my heart is rent, to hear of your illness and its cruel result, just now communicated to me by Dr. Grahn. But surely it is possible that this result may not be permanent. For youth such as yours, Time may hold in store something more than resignation: who shall say that it does not hold renewal? I have not dared to ask admission to you in the hours of a recent shock, but I cannot depart on a long mission without tendering my sympathy and my farewell. I start this evening for the Caucasus, and thence I proceed to India, where I am intrusted by the Government with business which may be of long duration."

(WALPURGA *sits down dejectedly.*)

ARMGART (*after a slight shudder, bitterly.*)

The Graf has much discretion. I am glad.

He spares us both a pain, not seeing me.

What I like least is that consoling hope —

That empty cup, so neatly ciphered "Time,"

Handed me as a cordial for despair.

(*Slowly and dreamily*) Time — what a word to fling as charity!

Bland neutral word for slow, dull-beating pain —

Days, months, and years! — If I would wait for them.

(*She takes up her hat and puts it on, then wraps her mantle round her.* WALPURGA *leaves the room.*)

Why, this is but beginning. (WALP. *re-enters.*) Kiss me, dear.

I am going now — alone — out — for a walk.

Say you will never wound me any more

With such cajolery as nurses use

To patience amorous of a crippled life.

Flatter the blind: I see.

WALPURGA.

Well, I was wrong.
 In haste to soothe, I snatched at flickers merely.
 Believe me, I will flatter you no more.

ARMGART.

Bear witness, I am calm. I read my lot
 As soberly as if it were a tale
 Writ by a creeping feuilletonist and called
 "The Woman's Lot: a Tale of Everyday:"
 A middling woman's, to impress the world
 With high superfluosness; her thoughts a crop
 Of chick-weed errors or of pot-herb facts,
 Smiled at like some child's drawing on a slate.
 "Genteel?" "O yes, gives lessons; not so good
 As any man's would be, but cheaper far."
 "Pretty?" "No; yet she makes a figure fit
 For good society. Poor thing, she sews
 Both late and early, turns and alters all
 To suit the changing mode. Some widower
 Might do well, marrying her; but in these days! . .
 Well, she can somewhat eke her narrow gains
 By writing, just to furnish her with gloves
 And droschkies in the rain. They print her things
 Often for charity." — Oh, a dog's life!
 A harnessed dog's, that draws a little cart
 Voted a nuisance! I am going now.

WALPURGA.

Not now, the door is locked!

ARMGART.

Give me the key!

WALPURGA.

Locked on the outside. Gretchen has the key:
 She is gone on errands.

ARMGART.

What, you dare to keep me
Your prisoner ?

WALPURGA.

And have I not been yours ?
Your wish has been a bolt to keep me in.
Perhaps that middling woman whom you paint
With far-off scorn

ARMGART

I paint what I must be !
What is my soul to me without the voice
That gave it freedom ? — gave it one grand touch
And make it nobly human ? — Prisoned now,
Prisoned in all the petty mimicries
Called woman's knowledge, that will fit the world
As doll-clothes fit a man. I can do nought
Better than what a million women do —
Must drudge among the crowd and feel my life
Beating upon the world without response,
Beating with passion through an insect's horn
That moves a millet-seed laboriously.
If I *would* do it !

WALPURGA (*coldly*).

And why should you not ?

ARMGART (*turning quickly*).

Because Heaven made me royal — wrought me out
With subtle finish towards pre-eminence,
Made every channel of my soul converge
To one high function, and then flung me down,
That breaking I might turn to subtlest pain.
An inborn passion gives a rebel's right :
I would rebel and die in twenty worlds
Sooner than bear the yoke of thwarted life,
Each keenest sense turned into keen distaste,
Hunger not satisfied but kept alive
Breathing in languor half a century.

All the world now is but a rack of threads
 To twist and dwarf me into pettiness
 And basely feigned content, the placid mask
 Of women's misery.

WALPURGA (*indignantly*).

Ay, such a mask
 As the few born like you to easy joy,
 Cradled in privilege, take for natural
 On all the lowly faces that must look
 Upward to you! What revelation now
 Shows you the mask or gives presentiment
 Of sadness hidden? You who every day
 These five years saw me limp to wait on you
 And thought the order perfect which gave *me*,
 The girl without pretension to be aught,
 A splendid cousin for my happiness:
 To watch the night through when her brain was fired
 With too much gladness — listen, always listen
 To what *she* felt, who having power had right
 To feel exorbitantly, and submerge
 The souls around her with the poured-out flood
 Of what must be ere she were satisfied!
 That was feigned patience, was it? Why not love,
 Love nurtured even with that strength of self
 Which found no room save in another's life?
 Oh, such as I know joy by negatives,
 And all their deepest passion is a pang
 Till they accept their pauper's heritage,
 And meekly live from out the general store
 Of joy they were born stripped of. I accept —
 Nay, now would sooner choose it than the wealth
 Of natures you call royal, who can live
 In mere mock knowledge of their fellows' woe,
 Thinking their smiles may heal it.

ARMGART (*tremulously*).

Nay, Walpurga,
 I did not make a palace of my joy
 To shut the world's truth from me. All my good
 Was that I touched the world and made a part
 In the world's dower of beauty, strength, and bliss;

It was the glimpse of consciousness divine
Which pours out day and sees the day is good.
Now I am fallen dark ; I sit in gloom,
Remembering bitterly. Yet you speak truth ;
I wearied you, it seems ; took all your help
As cushioned nobles use a weary serf,
Not looking at his face.

WALPURGA.

Oh, I but stand
As a small symbol for the mighty sum
Of claims unpaid to needy myriads ;
I think you never set your loss beside
That mighty deficit. Is your work gone —
The prouder queenly work that paid itself
And yet was overpaid with men's applause ?
Are you no longer chartered, privileged,
But sunk to simple woman's penury,
To ruthless Nature's chary average —
Where is the rebel's right for you alone ?
Noble rebellion lifts a common load ;
But what is he who flings his own load off
And leaves his fellows toiling ? Rebel's right ?
Say rather, the deserter's. Oh, you smiled
From your clear height on all the million lots
Which yet you brand as abject.

ARMGART.

I was blind
With too much happiness : true vision comes
Only, it seems, with sorrow. Were there one
This moment near me, suffering what I feel,
And needing me for comfort in her pang —
Then it were worth the while to live ; not else.

WALPURGA.

One — near you — why, they throng ! you hardly stir
But your act touches them. We touch afar.
For did not swarthy slaves of yesterday
Leap in their bondage at the Hebrews' flight,
Which touched them through the thrice millennial dark ?

But you can find the sufferer you need
With touch less subtle.

ARMGART.

Who has need of me ?

WALPURGA.

Love finds the need it fills. But you are hard.

ARMGART.

Is it not you, Walpurga, who are hard ?
You humored all my wishes till to-day,
When fate has blighted me.

WALPURGA.

You would not hear
The "chant of consolation : " words of hope
Only embittered you. Then hear the truth —
A lame girl's truth, whom no one ever praised
For being cheerful. " It is well," they said :
" Were she gross-grained she could not be endured."
A word of truth from her had startled you ;
But you — you claimed the universe ; nought less
Than all existence working in sure tracks
Towards your supremacy. The wheels might scathe
A myriad destinies — nay, must perforce ;
But yours they must keep clear of ; just for you
The seething atoms through the firmament
Must bear a human heart — which you had not !
For what is it to you that women, men,
Plod, faint, are weary, and espouse despair
Of aught but fellowship ? Save that you spurn
To be among them ? Now, then, you are lame —
Maimed, as you said, and levelled with the crowd :
Call it new birth — birth from that monstrous Self
Which, smiling down upon a race oppressed,
Says, " All is good, for I am throned at ease."
Dear Armgart — nay, you tremble — I am cruel.

ARMGART.

O no! Hark! Some one knocks. Come in! — come in!
(Enter LEO.)

LEO.

See, Gretchen let me in. I could not rest
Longer away from you.

ARMGART.

Sit down, dear Leo.
Walpurga, I would speak with him alone
(WALPURGA goes out.)

LEO (*hesitatingly*.)

You mean to walk?

ARMGART.

No, I shall stay within.
(*She takes off her hat and mantle, and sits down immediately. After a pause, speaking in a subdued tone to LEO.*)
How old are you?

LEO.

Threescore and five.

ARMGART.

That's old.
I never thought till now how you have lived.
They hardly ever play your music?

LEO (*raising his eyebrows and throwing out his lip.*)

No!
Schubert too wrote for silence: half his work
Lay like a frozen Rhine till summers came
That warmed the grass above him. Even so!
His music lives now with a mighty youth.

ARMGART.

Do you think yours will live when you are dead ?

LEO.

Pfui ! The time was, I drank that home-brewed wine
And found it heady, while my blood was young :
Now it scarce warms me. Tipple it as I may,
I am sober still, and say : " My old friend Leo,
Much grain is wasted in the world and rots ;
Why not thy handful ? "

ARMGART.

Strange ! since I have known you
Till now I never wondered how you lived.
When I sang well — that was your jubilee.
But you were old already.

LEO.

Yes, child, yes :
Youth thinks itself the goal of each old life ;
Age has but travelled from 'a far-off time
Just to be ready for youth's service. Well !
It was my chief delight to perfect you.

ARMGART.

Good Leo ! You have lived on little joys.
But your delight in me is crushed for ever.
Your pains, where are they now ? They shaped intent
Which action frustrates ; shaped an inward sense
Which is but keen despair, the agony
Of highest vision in the lowest pit.

LEO.

Nay, nay, I have a thought : keep to the stage,
To drama without song ; for you can act —
Who knows how well, when all the soul is poured
Into that sluice alone ?

ARMGART.

I know, and you :
 The second or third best in tragedies
 That cease to touch the fibre of the time.
 No; song is gone, but nature's other gift,
 Self-judgment, is not gone. Song was my speech,
 And with its impulse only, action came :
 Song was the battle's onset, when cool purpose
 Glows into rage, becomes a warring god
 And moves the limbs with miracle. But now —
 Oh, I should stand hemmed in with thoughts and rules —
 Say "This way passion acts," yet never feel
 The might of passion. How should I declaim ?
 As monsters write with feet instead of hands.
 I will not feed on doing great tasks ill,
 Dull the world's sense with mediocrity,
 And live by trash that smothers excellence.
 One gift I had that ranked me with the best —
 The secret of my frame — and that is gone.
 For all life now I am a broken thing.
 But silence there ! Good Leo, advise me now.
 I would take humble work and do it well —
 Teach music, singing — what I can — not here,
 But in some smaller town where I may bring
 The method you have taught me, pass your gift
 To others who can use it for delight.
 You think I can do that ?

(She pauses with a sob in her voice.)

LEO.

Yes, yes, dear child !
 And it were well, perhaps, to change the place —
 Begin afresh as I did when I left
 Vienna with a heart half broken.

ARMGART *(roused by surprise)*.

You ?

LEO.

Well, it is long ago. But I had lost —
 No matter ! We must bury our dead joys

And live above them with a living world.
But whither, think you, you would like to go?

ARMGART.

To Freiburg.

LEO.

In the Breisgau? And why there?
It is too small.

ARMGART.

Walpurga was born there,
And loves the place. She quitted it for me
These five years past. Now I will take her there.
Dear Leo, I will bury my dead joy.

LEO.

Mothers do so, bereaved; then learn to love
Another's living child.

ARMGART.

Oh, it is hard
To take the little corpse, and lay it low,
And say, "None misses it but me."
She sings . . .
I mean Paulina sings Fidelio,
And they will welcome her to-night.

LEO.

Well, well,
'T is better that our griefs should not spread far.

1870.

HOW LISA LOVED THE KING.

Six hundred years ago, in Dante's time,
Before his cheek was furrowed by deep rhyme —
When Europe fed afresh from Eastern story,
Was like a garden tangled with the glory
Of flowers hand-planted and of flowers air-sown,
Climbing and trailing, budding and full-blown,
Where purple bells are tossed amid pink stars,
And springing blades, green troops in innocent wars,
Crowd every shady spot of teeming earth,
Making invisible motion visible birth —
Six hundred years ago, Palermo town
Kept holiday. A deed of great renown,
A high revenge, had freed it from the yoke
Of hated Frenchmen, and from Calpe's rock
To where the Bosphorus caught the earlier sun.
'Twas told that Pedro, King of Aragon,
Was welcomed master of all Sicily,
A royal knight, supreme as kings should be
In strength and gentleness that make high chivalry.

Spain was the favorite home of knightly grace,
Where generous men rode steeds of generous race;
Both Spanish, yet half Arab, both inspired
By mutual spirit, that each motion fired
With beauteous response, like minstrelsy
Afresh fulfilling fresh expectancy.
So when Palermo made high festival,
The joy of matrons and of maidens all
Was the mock terror of the tournament,
Where safety, with the glimpse of danger blent,
Took exaltation as from epic song,
Which greatly tells the pains that to great life belong.

And in all eyes King Pedro was the king
Of cavaliers: as in a full-gemmed ring
The largest ruby, or as that bright star
Whose shining shows us where the Hyads are.
His the best jennet, and he sat it best;
His weapon, whether tilting or in rest,
Was worthiest watching, and his face once seen
Gave to the promise of his royal mien
Such rich fulfilment as the opened eyes
Of a loved sleeper, or the long-watched rise
Of vernal day, whose joy o'er stream and meadow flies.

But of the maiden forms that thick enwreathed
The broad piazza and sweet witchery breathed,
With innocent faces budding all arow
From balconies and windows high and low,
Who was it felt the deep mysterious glow,
The impregnation with supernal fire
Of young ideal love — transformed desire,
Whose passion is but worship of that Best
Taught by the many-mingled creed of each young breast?
'T was gentle Lisa, of no noble line,
Child of Bernardo, a rich Florentine,
Who from his merchant-city hither came
To trade in drugs; yet kept an honest fame,
And had the virtue not to try and sell
Drugs that had none. He loved his riches well,
But loved them chiefly for his Lisa's sake,
Whom with a father's care he sought to make
The bride of some true honorable man: —
Of Perdicone (so the rumor ran),
Whose birth was higher than his fortunes were;
For still your trader likes a mixture fair
Of blood that hurries to some higher strain
Than reckoning money's loss and money's gain.
And of such mixture good may surely come:
Lords' scions so may learn to cast a sum,
A trader's grandson bear a well-set head,
And have less conscious manners, better bred;
Nor, when he tries to be polite, be rude instead.

'T was Perdicone's friends made overtures
To good Bernardo: so one dame assures
Her neighbor dame who notices the youth

Fixing his eyes on Lisa ; and in truth
Eyes that could see her on this summer day
Might find it hard to turn another way.
She had a pensive beauty, yet not sad ;
Rather, like minor cadences that glad
The hearts of little birds amid spring boughs ;
And oft the trumpet or the joust would rouse
Pulses that gave her cheek a finer glow,
Parting her lips that seemed a mimic bow
By chiselling Love for play in coral wrought,
Then quickened by him with the passionate thought,
The soul that trembled in the lustrous night
Of slow long eyes. Her body was so slight,
It seemed she could have floated in the sky,
And with the angelic choir made symphony ;
But in her cheek's rich tinge, and in the dark
Of darkest hair and eyes, she bore a mark
Of kinship to her generous mother earth,
The fervid land that gives the plummy palm-trees birth.
She saw not Perdicone ; her young mind
Dreamed not that any man had ever pined
For such a little simple maid as she :
She had but dreamed how heavenly it would be
To love some hero noble, beauteous, great,
Who would live stories worthy to narrate,
Like Roland, or the warriors of Troy,
The Cid, or Amadis, or that fair boy
Who conquered everything beneath the sun,
And somehow, some time, died at Babylon
Fighting the Moors. For heroes all were good
And fair as that archangel who withstood
The Evil One, the author of all wrong —
That Evil One who made the French so strong ;
And now the flower of heroes must be he
Who drove those tyrants from dear Sicily,
So that her maids might walk to vespers tranquilly.

Young Lisa saw this hero in the king,
And as wood-lilies that sweet odors bring
Might dream the light that opes their modest eyne
Was lily-odored, — and as rites divine,
Round turf-laid altars, or 'neath roofs of stone,
Draw sanctity from out the heart alone
That loves and worships, so the miniature

Perplexed of her soul's world, all virgin pure,
Filled with heroic virtues that bright form,
Raona's royalty, the finished norm
Of horsemanship — the half of chivalry :
For how could generous men avengers be,
Save as God's messengers on coursers fleet ? —
These, scouring earth, made Spain with Syria meet
In one self world where the same right had sway,
And good must grow as grew the blessed day.
No more ; great Love his essence had endured
With Pedro's form, and entering subdued
The soul of Lisa, fervid and intense,
Proud in its choice of proud obedience
To hardship glorified by perfect reverence.

Sweet Lisa homeward carried that dire guest,
And in her chamber through the hours of rest
The darkness was alight for her with sheen
Of arms, and plumed helm, and bright between
Their commoner gloss, like the pure living spring
"Twixt porphyry lips, or living bird's bright wing
"Twixt golden wires, the glances of the king
Flashed on her soul, and waked vibrations there
Of known delights love-mixed to new and rare :
The impalpable dream was turned to breathing flesh,
Chill thought of summer to the warm close mesh
Of sunbeams held between the citron-leaves,
Clothing her life of life. Oh, she believes
That she could be content if he but knew
(Her poor small self could claim no other due)
How Lisa's lowly love had highest reach
Of winged passion, whereto winged speech
Would be scorched remnants left by mounting flame.
Though, had she such lame message, were it blame
To tell what greatness dwelt in her, what rank
She held in loving ? Modest maidens shrank
From telling love that fed on selfish hope ;
But love, as hopeless as the shattering song
Wailed for loved beings who have joined the throng
Of mighty dead ones. . . . Nay, but she was weak —
Knew only prayers and ballads — could not speak
With eloquence save what dumb creatures have,
That with small cries and touches small boons crave.

She watched all day that she might see him pass
With knights and ladies; but she said, "Alas!"
Though he should see me, it were all as one
He saw a pigeon sitting on the stone
Of wall or balcony: some colored spot
His eye just sees, his mind regardeth not.
I have no music-touch that could bring nigh
My love to his soul's hearing. I shall die,
And he will never know who Lisa was —
The trader's child, whose soaring spirit rose
As hedge-born aloe-flowers that rarest years disclose.

"For were I now a fair deep-breasted queen
A-horseback, with blonde hair, and tunic green
Gold-bordered, like Costanza, I should need
No change within to make me queenly there;
For they the royal-hearted women are
Who nobly love the noblest, yet have grace
For needy suffering lives in lowliest place,
Carrying a choicer sunlight in their smile,
The heavenliest ray that pitieth the vile.
My love is such, it cannot choose but soar
Up to the highest; yet for evermore,
Though I were happy, throned beside the king,
I should be tender to each little thing
With hurt warm breast, that had no speech to tell
Its inward pang, and I would soothe it well
With tender touch and with a low soft moan
For company: my dumb love-pang is lone,
Prisoned as topaz-beam within a rough-garbed stone."

So, inward-wailing, Lisa passed her days.
Each night the August moon with changing phase
Looked broader, harder on her unchanged pain;
Each noon the heat lay heavier again
On her despair; until her body frail
Shrank like the snow that watchers in the vale
See narrowed on the height each summer morn;
While her dark glance burnt larger, more forlorn,
As if the soul within her all on fire
Made of her being one swift funeral pyre.
Father and mother saw with sad dismay
The meaning of their riches melt away:
For without Lisa what would sequins buy?

What wish were left if Lisa were to die ?
Through her they cared for summers still to come,
Else they would be as ghosts without a home
In any flesh that could feel glad desire.
They pay the best physicians, never tire
Of seeking what will soothe her, promising
That aught she longed for, though it were a thing
Hard to be come at as the Indian snow,
Or roses that on alpine summits blow —
It should be hers. She answers with low voice,
She longs for death alone — death is her choice ;
Death is the King who never did think scorn,
But rescues every meanest soul to sorrow born.

Yet one day, as they bent above her bed
And watched her in brief sleep, her drooping head
Turned gently, as the thirsty flowers that feel
Some moist revival through their petals steal,
And little flutterings of her lids and lips
Told of such dreamy joy as sometimes dips
A skyey shadow in the mind's poor pool.
She oped her eyes, and turned their dark gems full
Upon her father, as in utterance dumb
Of some new prayer that in her sleep had come.
"What is it, Lisa ?" "Father, I would see
Minuccio, the great singer ; bring him me.
For always, night and day, her unstilled thought,
Wandering all o'er its little world, had sought
How she could reach, by some soft pleading touch,
King Pedro's soul, that she who loved so much
Dying, might have a place within his mind —
A little grave which he would sometimes find
And plant some flower on it — some thought, some
memory kind.
Till in her dream she saw Minuccio
Touching his viola, and chanting low
A strain that, falling on her brokenly,
Seemed blossoms lightly blown from off a tree,
Each burdened with a word that was a scent —
Raona, Lisa, love, death, tournament ;
Then in her dream she said, "He sings of me —
Might be my messenger ; ah, now I see
The king is listening —" Then she awoke,
And, missing her dear dream, that new-born longing

She longed for music: that was natural;
Physicians said it was medicinal;
The humors might be schooled by true consent
Of a fine tenor and fine instrument;
In brief, good music, mixed with doctor's stuff,
Apollo with Asklepios — enough!
Minuccio, entreated, gladly came.
(He was a singer of most gentle fame —
A noble, kindly spirit, not elate
That he was famous, but that song was great —
Would sing as finely to this suffering child
As at the court where princes on him smiled.)
Gently he entered and sat down by her,
Asking what sort of strain she would prefer —
The voice alone, or voice with viol wed;
Then, when she chose the last, he preluded
With magic hand, that summoned from the strings
Aërial spirits, rare yet vibrant wings
That fanned the pulses of his listener,
And waked each sleeping sense with blissful stir.
Her cheek already showed a slow faint blush,
But soon the voice, in pure full liquid rush,
Made all the passion, that till now she felt,
Seem but cool waters that in warmer melt.
Finished the song, she prayed to be alone
With kind Minuccio; for her faith had grown
To trust him as if missioned like a priest
With some high grace, that when his singing ceased
Still made him wiser, more magnanimous
Than common men who had no genius.

So laying her small hand within his palm,
She told him how that secret glorious harm
Of loftiest loving had befallen her;
That death, her only hope, most bitter were,
If when she died her love must perish too
As songs unsung and thoughts unspoken do,
Which else might live within another breast.
She said, "Minuccio, the grave were rest,
If I were sure, that lying cold and lone,
My love, my best of life, had safely flown
And nestled in the bosom of the king;
See, 't is a small weak bird, with unfledged wing.
But you will carry it for me secretly,

And bear it to the king, then come to me
And tell me it is safe, and I shall go
Content, knowing that he I love my love doth know."

Then she wept silently, but each large tear
Made pleading music to the inward ear
Of good Minuccio. "Lisa, trust in me,"
He said, and kissed her fingers loyally;
"It is sweet law to me to do your will,
And ere the sun his round shall thrice fulfil,
I hope to bring you news of such rare skill
As amulets have, that aches in trusting bosoms still."

He needed not to pause and first devise
How he should tell the king; for in nowise
Were such love-message worthily bested
Save in fine verse by music rendered.
He sought a poet-friend, a Siennese,
And "Mico, mine," he said, "full oft to please
Thy whim of sadness I have sung thee strains
To make thee weep in verse: now pay my pains,
And write me a canzòn divinely sad,
Sinlessly passionate and meekly mad
With young despair, speaking a maiden's heart
Of fifteen summers, who would fain depart
From ripening life's new-urgent mystery —
Love-choice of one too high her love to be —
But cannot yield her breath till she has poured
Her strength away in this hot-bleeding word
Telling the secret of her soul to her soul's lord."

Said Mico, "Nay, that thought is poesy,
I need but listen as it sings to me.
Come thou again to-morrow." The third day,
When linked notes had perfected the lay,
Minuccio had his summons to the court
To make, as he was wont, the moments short
Of ceremonious dinner to the king.
This was the time when he had meant to bring
Melodious message of young Lisa's love:
He waited till the air had ceased to move
To ringing silver, till Falernian wine
Made quickened sense with quietude combine,
And then with passionate descant made each ear inclin

*Love, thou didst see me, light as morning's breath,
Roaming a garden in a joyous error,
Laughing at chases vain, a happy child,
Till of thy countenance the alluring terror
In majesty from out the blossoms smiled,
From out their life seeming a beauteous Death.*

*O Love, who so didst choose me for thine own,
Taking this little isle to thy great sway,
See now, it is the honor of thy throne
That what thou gavest perish not away,
Nor leave some sweet remembrance to atone
By life that will be for the brief life gone :
Hear, ere the shroud o'er these frail limbs be thrown —
Since every king is vassal unto thee,
My heart's lord needs must listen loyally —
O tell him I am waiting for my Death !*

*Tell him, for that he hath such royal power
'Twere hard for him to think how small a thing,
How slight a sign, would make a wealthy dower
For one like me, the bride of that pale king
Whose bed is mine at some swift-nearing hour.
Go to my lord, and to his memory bring
That happy birthday of my sorrowing
When his large glance made meaner gazers glad,
Entering the bannered lists : 't was then I had
The wound that laid me in the arms of Death.*

*Tell him, O Love, I am a lowly maid,
No more than any little knot of thyme
That he with careless foot may often tread ;
Yet lowest fragrance oft will mount sublime
And cleave to things most high and hallowèd,
As doth the fragrance of my life's springtime,
My lowly love, that soaring seeks to climb
Within his thought, and make a gentle bliss,
More blissful than if mine, in being his :
So shall I live in him and rest in Death.*

The strain was new. It seemed a pleading cry,
And yet a rounded perfect melody,
Making grief beauteous as the tear-filled eyes
Of little child at little miseries.

Trembling at first, then swelling as it rose,
Like rising light that broad and broader grows,
It filled the hall, and so possessed the air
That not one breathing soul was present there,
Though dullest, slowest, but was quivering
In music's grasp, and forced to hear her sing.
But most such sweet compulsion took the mood
Of Pedro (tired of doing what he would).
Whether the words which that strange meaning bore
Were but the poet's feigning or aught more,
Was bounden question, since their aim must be
At some imagined or true royalty.
He called Minuccio and bade him tell
What poet of the day had writ so well;
For though they came behind all former rhymes,
The verses were not bad for these poor times.
"Monsignor, they are only three days old,"
Minuccio said; "but it must not be told
How this song grew, save to your royal ear."
Eager, the king withdrew where none was near,
And gave close audience to Minuccio,
Who meetly told that love-tale meet to know.
The king had features pliant to confess
The presence of a manly tenderness—
Son, father, brother, lover, blent in one,
In fine harmonic exaltation—
The spirit of religious chivalry.
He listened, and Minuccio could see
The tender, generous admiration spread
O'er all his face, and glorify his head
With royalty that would have kept its rank
Though his brocaded robes to tatters shrank.
He answered without pause, "So sweet a maid,
In nature's own insignia arrayed,
Though she were come of unmix'd trading blood
That sold and bartered ever since the Flood,
Would have the self-contained and single worth
Of radiant jewels born in darksome earth.
Raona were a shame to Sicily,
Letting such love and tears unhonored be:
Hasten, Minuccio, tell her that the king
To-day will surely visit her when vespers ring."

Joyful, Minuccio bore the joyous word,

And told at full, while none but Lisa heard,
How each thing had befallen, sang the song,
And like a patient nurse who would prolong
All means of soothing, dwelt upon each tone,
Each look, with which the mighty Aragon
Marked the high worth his royal heart assigned
To that dear place he held in Lisa's mind.
She listened till the draughts of pure content
Through all her limbs like some new being went —
Life, not recovered, but untried before,
From out the growing world's unmeasured store
Of fuller, better, more divinely mixed.
'T was glad reversed : she had so firmly fixed
To die, already seemed to fall a veil
Shrouding the inner glow from light of senses pale.

Her parents wondering see her half arise —
Wondering, rejoicing, see her long dark eyes
Brimful with clearness, not of 'scaping tears,
But of some light ethereal that enspheres
Their orbs with calm, some vision newly learnt
Where strangest fires erewhile had blindly burnt.
She asked to have her soft white robe and band
And coral ornaments, and with her hand
She gave her locks' dark length a backward fall,
Then looked intently in a mirror small,
And feared her face might perhaps displease the king ;
"In truth," she said, "I am a tiny thing ;
I was too bold to tell what could such visit bring."

Meanwhile the king, revolving in his thought
That virgin passion, was more deeply wrought
To chivalrous pity ; and at vesper bell,
With careless mien which hid his purpose well,
Went forth on horseback, and as if by chance
Passing Bernardo's house, he paused to glance
At the fine garden of this wealthy man,
This Tuscan trader turned Palermitan :
But, presently dismounting, chose to walk
Amid the trellises, in gracious talk
With this same trader, deigning even to ask
If he had yet fulfilled the father's task
Of marrying that daughter whose young charms
Himself, betwixt the passages of arms.

Noted admiringly. "Monsignor, no,
She is not married; that were little woe,
Since she has counted barely fifteen years;
But all such hopes of late have turned to fears;
She droops and fades; though for a space quite brief
Scarcely three hours past — she finds some strange relief
The king avised: "'T were dole to all of us,
The world should lose a maid so beauteous;
Let me now see her; since I am her liege lord,
Her spirits must wage war with death at my strong word
In such half-serious playfulness, he wends,
With Lisa's father and two chosen friends,
Up to the chamber where she pillowed sits
Watching the open door, that now admits
A presence as much better than her dreams,
As happiness than any longing seems.
The king advanced, and, with a reverent kiss
Upon her hand, said, "Lady, what is this?
You, whose sweet youth should others' solace be,
Pierce all our hearts, languishing piteously.
We pray you, for the love of us, be cheered,
Nor be too reckless of that life, endeared
To us who know your passing worthiness,
And count your blooming life as part of our life's bliss
Those words, that touch upon her hand from him
Whom her soul worshipped, as far seraphim
Worship the distant glory, brought some shame
Quivering upon her cheek, yet thrilled her frame
With such deep joy she seemed in paradise,
In wondering gladness, and in dumb surprise
That bliss could be so blissful: then she spoke —
"Signor, I was too weak to bear the yoke,
The golden yoke of thoughts too great for me;
That was the ground of my infirmity.
But now, I pray your grace to have belief
That I shall soon be well, nor any more cause grief."

The king alone perceived the covert sense
Of all her words, which made one evidence
With her pure voice and candid loveliness,
That he had lost much honor, honoring less
That message of her passionate distress.
He stayed beside her for a little while
With gentle looks and speech, until a smile

As placid as a ray of early morn
On opening flower-cups o'er her lips was born.
When he had left her, and the tidings spread
Through all the town how he had visited
The Tuscan trader's daughter, who was sick,
Men said, it was a royal deed and catholic.

And Lisa ? she no longer wished for death ;
But as a poet, who sweet verses saith
Within his soul, and joys in music there,
Nor seeks another heaven, nor can bear
Disturbing pleasures, so was she content,
Breathing the life of grateful sentiment.
She thought no maid betrothed could be more blest ;
For treasure must be valued by the test
Of highest excellence and rarity,
And her dear joy was best as best could be ;
There seemed no other crown to her delight
Now the high loved one saw her love aright.
Thus her soul thriving on that exquisite mood,
Spread like the May-time all its beauteous good
O'er the soft bloom of neck, and arms and cheek,
And strengthened the sweet body, once so weak,
Until she rose and walked, and, like a bird
With sweetly rippling throat, she made her spring joys
heard.

The king, when he the happy change had seen,
Trusted the ear of Constance, his fair queen,
With Lisa's innocent secret, and conferred
How they should jointly, by their deed and word,
Honor this maiden's love, which, like the prayer
Of loyal hermits, never thought to share
In what it gave. The queen had that chief grace
Of womanhood, a heart that can embrace
All goodness in another woman's form ;
And that same day, ere the sun lay too warm
On southern terraces, a messenger
Informed Bernardo that the royal pair
Would straightway visit him and celebrate
Their gladness at his daughter's happier state,
Which they were fain to see. Soon came the king
On horseback, with his barons, heralding
The advent of the queen in courtly state ;
And all, descending at the garden gate,

Streamed with their feathers, velvet, and brocade,
Through the pleached alleys, till they, pausing, made
A lake of splendor 'mid the aloes gray —
When, meekly facing all their proud array,
The white-robed Lisa with her parents stood,
As some white dove before the gorgeous brood
Of dapple-breasted birds born by the Colchian flood.

The king and queen, by gracious looks and speech,
Encouraged her, and thus their courtiers teach
How this fair morning they may courtliest be
By making Lisa pass it happily.
And soon the ladies and the barons all
Draw her by turns, as at a festival
Made for her sake, to easy, gay discourse,
And compliment with looks and smiles enforce;
A joyous hum is heard the gardens round;
Soon there is Spanish dancing and the sound
Of minstrel's song, and autumn fruits are pluckt;
Till mindfully the king and queen conduct
Lisa apart to where a trellised shade
Made pleasant resting. Then King Pedro said —
"Excellent maiden, that rich gift of love
Your heart hath made us, hath a worth above
All royal treasures, nor is fitly met
Save when the grateful memory of deep debt
Lies still behind the outward honors done:
And as a sign that no oblivion
Shall overflow that faithful memory,
We while we live your cavalier will be,
Nor will we ever arm ourselves for fight,
Whether for struggle dire or brief delight
Of warlike feigning, but we first will take
The colors you ordain, and for your sake
Charge the more bravely where your emblem is;
Nor will we ever claim an added bliss
To our sweet thoughts of you save one sole kiss.
But there still rests the outward honor meet
To mark your worthiness, and we entreat
That you will turn your ear to proffered vows
Of one who loves you, and would be your spouse.
We must not wrong yourself and Sicily
By letting all your blooming years pass by

Unmated : you will give the world its due
From beauteous maiden and become a matron true."

Then Lisa wrapt in virgin wonderment
At her ambitious love's complete content,
Which left no further good for her to seek
Than love's obedience, said with accent meek —
" Monsignor, I know well that were it known
To all the world how high my love had flown,
There would be few who would not deem me mad,
Or say my mind the falsest image had
Of my condition and your lofty place.
But heaven has seen that for no moment's space
Have I forgotten you to be the king,
Or me myself to be a lowly thing —
A little lark, enamoured of the sky,
That soared to sing, to break its breast, and die.
But, as you better know than I, the heart
In choosing chooseth not its own desert,
But that great merit which attracteth it ;
'T is law, I struggled, but I must submit,
And having seen a worth all worth above,
I loved you, love you, and shall always love.
But that doth mean, my will is ever yours,
Not only when your will my good insures,
But if it wrought me what the world calls harm —
Fire, wounds, would wear from your dear will a charm
That you will be my knight is full content,
And for that kiss — I pray, first for the queen's consent."

Her answer, given with such firm gentleness,
Pleased the queen well, and made her hold no less
Of Lisa's merit than the king had held.
And so, all cloudy threats of grief dispelled,
There was betrothal made that very morn
'Twixt Perdicone, youthful, brave, well-born,
And Lisa, whom he loved ; she loving well
The lot that from obedience befell.
The queen a rare betrothal ring on each
Bestowed, and other gems, with gracious speech.
And that no joy might lack, the king, who knew
The youth was poor, gave him rich Ceffalù
And Cataletta, large and fruitful lands —
Adding much promise when he joined their hands.

As last he said to Lisa, with an air
Gallant yet noble : " Now we claim our share
From your sweet love, a share which is not small :
For in the sacrament one crumb is all."
Then taking her small face his hands between,
He kissed her on the brow with kiss serene,
Fit seal to that pure vision her young soul had seen.

Sicilians witnessed that King Pedro kept
His royal promise : Perdicone stept
To many honors honorably won,
Living with Lisa in true union.
Throughout his life the king still took delight
To call himself fair Lisa's faithful knight;
And never wore in field or tournament
A scarf or emblem save by Lisa sent.

Such deeds made subjects loyal in that land :
They joyed that one so worthy to command,
So chivalrous and gentle, had become
The king of Sicily, and filled the room
Of Frenchmen, who abused the Church's trust,
Till, in a righteous vengeance on their lust,
Messina rose, with God, and with the dagger's thrust

L'Envoi.

*Reader, this story pleased me long ago
In the bright pages of Boccaccio,
And where the author of a good we know,
Let us not fail to pay the grateful thanks we owe.*

1869.

A MINOR PROPHET.

I HAVE a friend, a vegetarian seer,
By name Elias Baptist Butterworth,
A harmless, bland, disinterested man,
Whose ancestors in Cromwell's day believed
The Second Advent certain in five years,
But when King Charles the Second came instead,
Revised their date and sought another world :
I mean — not heaven but — America.
A fervid stock, whose generous hope embraced
The fortunes of mankind, not stopping short
At rise of leather, or the fall of gold,
Nor listening to the voices of the time
As housewives listen to a cackling hen,
With wonder whether she has laid her egg
On their own nest-egg. Still they did insist
Somewhat too wearisomely on the joys
Of their Millennium, when coats and hats
Would all be of one pattern, books and songs
All fit for Sundays, and the casual talk
As good as sermons preached extempore.

And in Elias the ancestral zeal
Breathes strong as ever, only modified
By Transatlantic air and modern thought.
You could not pass him in the street and fail
To note his shoulder's long declivity,
Beard to the waist, swan-neck, and large pale eyes ;
Or, when he lifts his hat, to mark his hair
Brushed back to show his great capacity —
A full grain's length at the angle of the brow
Proving him witty, while the shallower men
Only seem witty in their repartees.

Not that he's vain, but that his doctrine needs
 The testimony of his frontal lobe.
 On all points he adopts the latest views;
 Takes for the key of universal Mind
 The "levitation" of stout gentlemen;
 Believes the Rappings are not spirits' work,
 But the Thought-atmosphere's, a steam of brains
 In correlated force of raps, as proved
 By motion, heat, and science generally;
 The spectrum, for example, which has shown
 The self-same metals in the sun as here;
 So the Thought-atmosphere is everywhere:
 High truths that glimmered under other names
 To ancient sages, whence good scholarship
 Applied to Eleusinian mysteries —
 The Vedas — Tripitaka — Vendidad —
 Might furnish weaker proof for weaker minds
 That Thought was rapping in the hoary past,
 And might have edified the Greeks by raps
 At the greater Dionysia, if their ears
 Had not been filled with Sophoclean verse.
 And when all Earth is vegetarian —
 When, lacking butchers, quadrupeds die out,
 And less Thought-atmosphere is reabsorbed
 By nerves of insects parasitical,
 Those higher truths, seized now by higher minds
 But not expressed (the insects hindering)
 Will either flash out into eloquence,
 Or better still, be comprehensible
 By rappings simply, without need of roots.

'T is on this theme — the vegetarian world —
 That good Elias willingly expands:
 He loves to tell in mildly nasal tones
 And vowels stretched to suit the widest views,
 The future fortunes of our infant earth —
 When it will be too full of human kind
 To have the room for wilder animals.
 Saith he, Sahara will be populous
 With families of gentlemen retired
 From commerce in more Central Africa,
 Who order coolness as we order coal,
 And have a lobe anterior strong enough
 To think away the sand-storms. Science thus

Will leave no spot on this terraqueous globe
Unfit to be inhabited by man,
The chief of animals: all meaner brutes
Will have been smoked and elbowed out of life.
No lions then shall lap Caffrarian pools,
Or shake the Atlas with their midnight roar:
Even the slow, slime-loving crocodile,
The last of animals to take a hint,
Will then retire for ever from a scene
Where public feeling strongly sets against him.
Fishes may lead carnivorous lives obscure,
But must not dream of culinary rank
Or being dished in good society.
Imagination in that distant age,
Aiming at fiction called historical,
Will vainly try to reconstruct the times
When it was men's preposterous delight
To sit astride live horses, which consumed
Materials for incalculable cakes;
When there were milkmaids who drew milk from cows
With udders kept abnormal for that end
Since the rude mythopœic period
Of Aryan dairymen, who did not blush
To call their milkmaid and their daughter one —
Helplessly gazing at the Milky Way,
Nor dreaming of the astral cocoa-nuts
Quite at the service of posterity.
'Tis to be feared, though, that the duller boys,
Much given to anachronisms and nuts,
(Elias has confessed boys will be boys)
May write a jockey for a centaur, think
Europa's suitor was an Irish bull,
Æsop a journalist who wrote up Fox,
And Bruin a chief swindler upon 'Change.
Boys will be boys, but dogs will all be moral,
With longer alimentary canals
Suited to diet vegetarian.
The uglier breeds will fade from memory,
Or, being palæontological,
Live but as portraits in large learned books,
Distasteful to the feelings of an age
Nourished on purest beauty. Earth will hold
No stupid brutes, no cheerful queernesses,
No naïve cunning, grave absurdity.

Wart-pigs with tender and parental grunts,
 Wombats much flattened as to their contour,
 Perhaps from too much crushing in the ark,
 But taking meekly that fatality;
 The serious cranes, unstung by ridicule;
 Long-headed, short-legged, solemn-looking curs,
 (Wise, silent critics of a flippant age);
 The silly straddling foals, the weak-brained geese
 Hissing fallaciously at sound of wheels —
 All these rude products will have disappeared
 Along with every faulty human type.
 By dint of diet vegetarian
 All will be harmony of hue and line,
 Bodies and minds all perfect, limbs well-turned,
 And talk quite free from aught erroneous.

Thus far Elias in his seer's mantle :
 But at this climax in his prophecy
 My sinking spirits, fearing to be swamped,
 Urge me to speak. "High prospects these, my
 friend,
 Setting the weak carnivorous brain astretch;
 We will resume the thread another day."
 "To-morrow," cries Elias, "at this hour?"
 "No, not to-morrow — I shall have a cold —
 At least I feel some soreness — this endemic —
 Good-bye."

No tears are sadder than the smile
 With which I quit Elias. Bitterly
 I feel that every change upon this earth
 Is bought with sacrifice. My yearnings fail
 To reach that high apocalyptic mount
 Which shows in bird's-eye view a perfect world,
 Or enter warmly into other joys
 Than those of faulty, struggling human kind.
 That strain upon my soul's too feeble wing
 Ends in ignoble floundering: I fall
 Into short-sighted pity for the men
 Who living in those perfect future times
 Will not know half the dear imperfect things
 That move my smiles and tears — will never know
 The fine old incongruities that raise
 My friendly laugh; the innocent conceits
 That like a needless eyeglass or black patch

Give those who wear them harmless happiness ;
 The twists and cracks in our poor earthenware,
 That touch me to more conscious fellowship
 (I am not myself the finest Parian)
 With my coevals. So poor Colin Clout,
 To whom raw onion gives prospective zest,
 Consoling hours of dampest wintry work,
 Could hardly fancy any regal joys
 Quite unimpregnate with the onion's scent :
 Perhaps his highest hopes are not all clear
 Of waftings from that energetic bulb :
 "T is well that onion is not heresy.
 Speaking in parable, I am Colin Clout.
 A clinging flavor penetrates my life —
 My onion is imperfectness : I cleave
 To nature's blunders, evanescent types
 Which sages banish from Utopia.
 "Not worship beauty?" say you. Patience, friend!
 I worship in the temple with the rest ;
 But by my hearth I keep a sacred nook
 For gnomes and dwarfs, duck-footed waddling elves
 Who stitched and hammered for the weary man
 In days of old. And in that piety
 I clothe ungainly forms inherited
 From toiling generations, daily bent
 At desk, or plough, or loom, or in the mine,
 In pioneering labors for the world.
 Nay, I am apt when floundering confused
 From too rash flight, to grasp at paradox,
 And pity future men who will not know
 A keen experience with pity blent,
 The pathos exquisite of lovely minds
 Hid in harsh forms — not penetrating them
 Like fire divine within a common bush
 Which glows transfigured by the heavenly guest,
 So that men put their shoes off ; but engaged
 Like a sweet child within some thick-walled cell,
 Who leaps and fails to hold the window-bars,
 But having shown a little dimpled hand
 Is visited thenceforth by tender hearts
 Whose eyes keep watch about the prison walls.
 A foolish, nay, a wicked paradox !
 For purest pity is the eye of love
 Melting at sight of sorrow ; and to grieve

Because it sees no sorrow, shows a love
Warped from its truer nature, turned to love
Of merest habit, like the miser's greed.
But I am Colin still : my prejudice
Is for the flavor of my daily food.
Not that I doubt the world is growing still
As once it grew from Chaos and from Night;
Or have a soul too shrunk for the hope
Which dawned in human breasts, a double morn;
With earliest watchings of the rising light
Chasing the darkness ; and through many an age
Has raised the vision of a future time
That stands an Angel with a face all mild
Spearing the demon. I too rest in faith
That man's perfection is the crowning flower,
Toward which the urgent sap in life's great tree
Is pressing, — seen in puny blossoms now,
But in the world's great morrows to expand
With broadest petal and with deepest glow.

Yet, see the patched and plodding citizen
Waiting upon the pavement with the throng
While some victorious world-hero makes
Triumphal entry, and the peal of shouts
And flash of faces 'neath uplifted hats
Run like a storm of joy along the streets !
He says, " God bless him ! " almost with a sob,
As the great hero passes ; he is glad
The world holds mighty men and mighty deeds ;
The music stirs his pulses like strong wine,
The moving splendor touches him with awe —
'T is glory shed around the common weal,
And he will pay his tribute willingly,
Though with the pennies earned by sordid toil.
Perhaps the hero's deeds have helped to bring
A time when every honest citizen
Shall wear a coat unpatched. And yet he feels
More easy fellowship with neighbors there
Who look on too ; and he will soon relapse
From noticing the banners and the steeds
To think with pleasure there is just one bun
Left in his pocket, that may serve to tempt
The wide-eyed lad, whose weight is all too much
For that young mother's arms : and then he falls

To dreamy picturing of sunny days
When he himself was a small big-cheeked lad
In some far village where no heroes came,
And stood a listener 'twixt his father's legs
In the warm fire-light, while the old folk talked
And shook their heads and looked upon the floor;
And he was puzzled, thinking life was fine —
The bread and cheese so nice all through the year
And Christmas sure to come. Oh that good time!
He, could he choose, would have those days again
And see the dear old-fashioned things once more.
But soon the wheels and drums have all passed by
And tramping feet are heard like sudden rain:
The quiet startles our good citizen;
He feels the child upon his arms, and knows
He is with the people making holiday
Because of hopes for better days to come.
But Hope to him was like the brilliant west
Telling of sunrise in a world unknown,
And from that dazzling curtain of bright hues
He turned to the familiar face of fields
Lying all clear in the calm morning land.
Maybe 'tis wiser not to fix a lens
Too scrutinizing on the glorious times
When Barbarossa shall arise and shake
His mountain, good King Arthur come again,
And all the heroes of such giant soul
That, living once to cheer mankind with hope,
They had to sleep until the time was ripe
For greater deeds to match their greater thought.
Yet no! the earth yields nothing more Divine
Than high prophetic vision — than the Seer
Who fasting from man's meaner joy beholds
The paths of beauteous order, and constructs
A fairer type, to shame our low content.
But prophecy is like potential sound
Which turned to music seems a voice sublime
From out the soul of light; but turns to noise
In scrannel pipes, and makes all ears averse.

The faith that life on earth is being shaped
To glorious ends, that order, justice, love
Mean man's completeness, mean effect as sure
As roundness in the dew-drop — that great faith

Is but the rushing and expanding stream
Of thought, of feeling, fed by all the past.
Our finest hope is finest memory,
As they who love in age think youth is blest
Because it has a life to fill with love.
Full souls are double mirrors, making still
An endless vista of fair things before
Repeating things behind : so faith is strong
Only when we are strong, shrinks when we shrink.
It comes when music stirs us, and the chords
Moving on some grand climax shake our souls
With influx new that makes new energies.
It comes in swellings of the heart and tears
That rise at noble and at gentle deeds —
At labors of the master-artist's hand
Which, trembling, touches to a finer end,
Trembling before an image seen within.
It comes in moments of heroic love,
Unjealous joy in joy not made for us —
In conscious triumph of the good within
Making us worship goodness that rebukes.
Even our failures are a prophecy,
Even our yearnings and our bitter tears
After that fair and true we cannot grasp ;
As patriots who seem to die in vain
Make liberty more sacred by their pangs.

Presentiment of better things on earth
Sweeps in with every force that stirs our souls
To admiration, self-renouncing love,
Or thoughts, like light, that bind the world in one :
Sweeps like the sense of vastness, when at night
We hear the roll and dash of waves that break
Nearer and nearer with the rushing tide,
Which rises to the level of the cliff
Because the wide Atlantic rolls behind
Throbbing respondent to the far-off orbs.

BROTHER AND SISTER.

I.

I CANNOT choose but think upon the time
When our two lives grew like two buds that kiss
At lightest thrill from the bee's swinging chime,
Because the one so near the other is.

He was the elder and a little man
Of forty inches, bound to show no dread,
And I the girl that puppy-like now ran,
Now lagged behind my brother's larger tread.

I held him wise, and when he talked to me
Of snakes and birds, and which God loved the best,
I thought his knowledge marked the boundary
Where men grew blind, though angels knew the rest.

If he said "Hush!" I tried to hold my breath
Wherever he said "Come!" I stepped in faith.

II.

Long years have left their writing on my brow,
But yet the freshness and the dew-fed beam
Of those young mornings are about me now,
When we two wandered toward the far-off stream

With rod and line. Our basket held a store
Baked for us only, and I thought with joy
That I should have my share, though he had more,
Because he was the elder and a boy.

The firmaments of daisies since to me
Have had those mornings in their opening eyes,
The bunched cowslip's pale transparency
Carries that sunshine of sweet memories,

And wild-rose branches take their finest scent
From those blest hours of infantine content.

III.

Our mother bade us keep the trodden ways,
Stroked down my tippet, set my brother's frill,
Then with the benediction of her gaze
Clung to us lessening, and pursued us still .

Across the homestead to the rookery elms,
Whose tall old trunks had each a grassy mound,
So rich for us, we counted them as realms
With varied products: here were earth-nuts found,

And here the Lady-fingers in deep shade;
Here sloping toward the Moat the rushes grew,
The large to split for pith, the small to braid:
While over all the dark rooks cawing flew,

And made a happy strange solemnity,
A deep-toned chant from life unknown to me

IV.

Our meadow-path had memorable spots:
One where it bridged a tiny rivulet,
Deep hid by tangled blue Forget-me-nots;
And all along the waving grasses met

My little palm, or nodded to my cheek,
When flowers with upturned faces gazing drew
My wonder downward, seeming all to speak
With eyes of souls that dumbly heard and knew.

Then came the copse, where wild things rushed unseen
And black-scathed grass betrayed the past abode
Of mystic gypsies, who still lurked between
Me and each hidden distance of the road.

A gypsy once had startled me at play,
Blotting with her dark smile my sunny day.

V.

Thus rambling we were schooled in deepest lore,
And learned the meanings that give words a soul,
The fear, the love, the primal passionate store,
Whose shaping impulses make manhood whole.

Those hours were seed to all my after good ;
My infant gladness, through eye, ear, and touch,
Took easily as warmth a various food
To nourish the sweet skill of loving much.

For who in age shall roam the earth and find
Reasons for loving that will strike out love
With sudden rod from the hard year-pressed mind ?
Were reasons sown as thick as stars above,

'T is love must see them, as the eye sees light :
Day is but Number to the darkened sight.

VI.

Our brown canal was endless to my thought ;
And on its banks I sat in dreamy peace,
Unknowing how the good I loved was wrought,
Untroubled by the fear that it would cease.

Slowly the barges floated into view
Rounding a grassy hill to me sublime
With some Unknown beyond it, whither flew
The parting cuckoo toward a fresh spring time.

The wide-arched bridge, the scented elder-flowers,
The wondrous watery rings that died too soon,
The echoes of the quarry, the still hours
With white robe sweeping-on the shadeless noon,

Were but my growing self, are part of me,
My present Past, my root of piety.

VII.

Those long days measured by my little feet
Had chronicles which yield me many a text;
Where irony still finds an image meet
Of full-grown judgments in this world perplex.

One day my brother left me in high charge,
To mind the rod, while he went seeking bait,
And bade me, when I saw a nearing barge,
Snatch out the line, lest he should come too late.

Proud of the task, I watched with all my might
For one whole minute, till my eyes grew wide,
Till sky and earth took on a strange new light
And seemed a dream-world floating on some tide —

A fair pavilioned boat for me alone
Bearing me onward through the vast unknown.

VIII.

But sudden came the barge's pitch-black prow,
Nearer and angrier came my brother's cry,
And all my soul was quivering fear, when lo!
Upon the imperilled line, suspended high,

A silver perch! My guilt that won the prey,
Now turned to merit, had a guerdon rich
Of hugs and praises, and made merry play,
Until my triumph reached its highest pitch

When all at home were told the wondrous feat,
And how the little sister had fished well.
In secret, though my fortune tasted sweet,
I wondered why this happiness befell.

"The little lass had luck," the gardener said:
And so I learned, luck was with glory wed.

IX.

We had the self-same world enlarged for each
By loving difference of girl and boy :
The fruit that hung on high beyond my reach
He plucked for me, and oft he must employ

A measuring glance to guide my tiny shoe
Where lay firm stepping-stones, or call to mind
"This thing I like my sister may not do
For she is little, and I must be kind."

Thus boyish Will the nobler mastery learned
Where inward vision over impulse reigns,
Widening its life with separate life discerned,
A Like unlike, a Self that self restrains.

His years with others must the sweeter be
For those brief days he spent in loving me.

X.

His sorrow was my sorrow, and his joy
Sent little leaps and laughs through all my frame ;
My doll seemed lifeless and no girlish toy
Had any reason when my brother came.

I knelt with him at marbles, marked his fling
Cut the ringed stem and make the apple drop,
Or watched him winding close the spiral string
That looped the orbits of the humming top.

Grasped by such fellowship my vagrant thought
Ceased with dream-fruit dream-wishes to fulfil ;
My æry-picturing fantasy was taught
Subjection to the harder, truer skill

That seeks with deeds to grave a thought-tracked line,
And by "What is," "What will be" to define.

XI.

School parted us ; we never found again
That childish world where our two spirits mingled
Like scents from varying roses that remain
One sweetness, nor can evermore be singled.

Yet the twin habit of that early time
Lingered for long about the heart and tongue :
We had been natives of one happy clime,
And its dear accents to our utterance clung.

Till the dire years whose awful name is Change
Had grasped our souls still yearning in divorce,
And pitiless shaped them in two forms that range
Two elements which sever their life's course.

But were another childhood-world my share,
I would be born a little sister there.

STRADIVARIUS.

YOUR soul was lifted by the wings to-day
Hearing the master of the violin :
You praised him, praised the great Sebastian too
Who made that fine Chaconne ; but did you think
Of old Antonio Stradivari ? — him
Who a good century and half ago
Put his true work in that brown instrument
And by the nice adjustment of its frame
Gave it responsive life, continuous
With the master's finger-tips and perfected
Like them by delicate rectitude of use.
Not Bach alone, helped by fine precedent
Of genius gone before, nor Joachim
Who holds the strain afresh incorporate
By inward hearing and notation strict
Of nerve and muscle, made our joy to-day :
Another soul was living in the air
And swaying it to true deliverance
Of high invention and responsive skill : —
That plain white-aproned man who stood at work
Patient and accurate full fourscore years,
Cherished his sight and touch by temperance,
And since keen sense is love of perfectness
Made perfect violins, the needed paths
For inspiration and high mastery.

No simpler man than he : he never cried,
“ Why was I born to this monotonous task
Of making violins ? ” or flung them down
To suit with hurling act a well-hurled curse
At labor on such perishable stuff.

Hence neighbors in Cremona held him dull,
 Called him a slave, a mill-horse, a machine,
 Begged him to tell his motives or to lend
 A few gold pieces to a loftier mind.
 Yet he had pithy words full fed by fact;
 For Fact, well-trusted, reasons and persuades,
 Is gnomie, cutting, or ironical,
 Draws tears, or is a tocsin to arouse —
 Can hold all figures of the orator
 In one plain sentence; has her pauses too —
 Eloquent silence at the chasm abrupt
 Where knowledge ceases. Thus Antonio
 Made answers as Fact willed, and made them strong.

Naldo, a painter of eclectic school,
 Taking his dicers, candlelight and grins
 From Caravaggio, and in holier groups
 Combining Flemish flesh with martyrdom —
 Knowing all tricks of style at thirty-one,
 And weary of them, while Antonio
 At sixty-nine wrought placidly his best
 Making the violin you heard to-day —
 Naldo would tease him oft to tell his aims.
 "Perhaps thou hast some pleasant vice to feed —
 The love of louis d'ors in heaps of four,
 Each violin a heap — I've nought to blame;
 My vices waste such heaps. But then, why work
 With painful nicety? Since fame once earned
 By luck or merit — oftenest by luck —
 (Else why do I put Bonifazio's name
 To work that '*pinxit Naldo*' would not sell?)
 Is welcome index to the wealthy mob
 Where they should pay their gold, and where they pay
 There they find merit — take your tow for flax,
 And hold the flax unlabelled with your name,
 Too coarse for sufferance."

Antonio then:
 "I like the gold — well, yes — but not for meals.
 And as my stomach, so my eye and hand,
 And inward sense that works alone with both,
 Have hunger that can never feed on coin.
 Who draws a line and satisfies his soul,
 Making it crooked where it should be straight?
 An idiot with an oyster-shell may draw

His lines along the sand, all wavering,
 Fixing no point or pathway to a point;
 An idiot one remove may choose his line,
 Straggle and be content; but God be praised,
 Antonio Stradivari has an eye
 That winces at false work and loves the true,
 With hand and arm that play upon the tool
 As willingly as any singing bird
 Sets him to sing his morning roundelay,
 Because he likes to sing and likes the song."

Then Naldo: "'T is a petty kind of fame
 At best, that comes of making violins;
 And saves no masses, either. Thou wilt go
 To purgatory none the less."

But he:

"'T were purgatory here to make them ill;
 And for my fame — when any master holds
 'Twixt chin and hand a violin of mine,
 He will be glad that Stradivari lived,
 Made violins, and made them of the best.
 The masters only know whose work is good:
 They will choose mine, and while God gives them skill
 I give them instruments to play upon,
 God choosing me to help Him."

"What! were God

At fault for violins, thou absent?"

"Yes;

He were at fault for Stradivari's work."

"Why, many hold Giuseppe's violins
 As good as thine."

"May be: they are different.

His quality declines: he spoils his hand
 With over-drinking. But were his the best,
 He could not work for two. My work is mine,
 And, heresy or not, if my hand slack'd
 I should rob God — since He is fullest good —
 Leaving a blank instead of violins.
 I say, not God Himself can make man's best
 Without best men to help Him. I am one best
 Here in Cremona, using sunlight well
 To fashion finest maple till it serves
 More cunningly than throats for harmony.

"T is rare delight : I would not change my skill
To be the Emperor with bungling hands,
And lose my work, which comes as natural
As self at waking."

"Thou art little more
Than a deft potter's wheel, Antonio;
Turning out work by mere necessity
And lack of varied function. Higher arts
Subsist on freedom — eccentricity —
Uncounted inspirations — influence
That comes with drinking, gambling, talk turned wild,
Then moody misery and lack of food —
With every dithyrambic fine excess :
These make at last a storm which flashes out
In lightning revelations. Steady work
Turns genius to a loom ; the soul must lie
Like grapes beneath the sun till ripeness comes
And mellow vintage. I could paint you now
The finest Crucifixion ; yesternight
Returning home I saw it on a sky
Blue-black, thick-starred. I want two louis d'ors
To buy the canvas and the costly blues —
Trust me a fortnight."

"Where are those last two
I lent thee for thy Judith ? — her thou saw'st
In saffron gown, with Holofernes' head
And beauty all complete ?"

"She is but sketched :
I lack the proper model — and the mood.
A great idea is an eagle's egg,
Craves time for hatching ; while the eagle sits
Feed her."

"If thou wilt call thy pictures eggs
I call the hatching, Work. 'T is God gives skill,
But not without men's hands : He could not make
Antonio Stradivari's violins
Without Antonio. Get thee to thy easel."

A COLLEGE BREAKFAST- PARTY.

YOUNG Hamlet, not the hesitating Dane,
But one named after him, who lately strove
For honors at our English Wittenberg, —
Blond, metaphysical, and sensuous,
Questioning all things and yet half convinced
Credulity were better; held inert
'T wixt fascinations of all opposites,
And half suspecting that the mightiest soul
(Perhaps his own?) was union of extremes,
Having no choice but choice of everything :
As, drinking deep to-day for love of wine,
To-morrow half a Brahmin, scorning life
As mere illusion, yearning for that True
Which has no qualities ; another day
Finding the fount of grace in sacraments,
And purest reflex of the light divine
In gem-bossed pyx and brodered chasuble,
Resolved to wear no stockings and to fast
With arms extended, waiting ecstasy ;
But getting cramps instead, and needing change,
A would-be pagan next : —

Young Hamlet sat

A guest with five of somewhat riper age
At breakfast with Horatio, a friend
With few opinions, but of faithful heart,
Quick to detect the fibrous spreading roots
Of character that feed men's theories,
Yet cloaking weaknesses with charity
And ready in all service save rebuke.

With ebb of breakfast and the cider-cup
 Came high debate: the others seated there
 Were Osric, spinner of fine sentences,
 A delicate insect creeping over life
 Feeding on molecules of floral breath,
 And weaving gossamer to trap the sun;
 Laertes ardent, rash, and radical;
 Discursive Rosencranz, grave Guildenstern,
 And he for whom the social meal was made —
 The polished priest, a tolerant listener,
 Disposed to give a hearing to the lost,
 And breakfast with them ere they went below.

From alpine metaphysic glaciers first
 The talk sprang copious; the themes were old,
 But so is human breath, so infant eyes,
 The daily nurslings of creative light.
 Small words held mighty meanings: Matter, Force,
 Self, Not-self, Being, Seeming, Space and Time —
 Plebeian toilers on the dusty road
 Of daily traffic, turned to Genii
 And cloudy giants darkening sun and moon.
 Creation was reversed in human talk:
 None said, "Let Darkness be," but Darkness was;
 And in it welted with Teutonic ease,
 An argumentative Leviathan,
 Blowing cascades from out his element,
 The thunderous Rosencranz, till

"Truce, I beg!"

Said Osric, with nice accent. "I abhor
 That battling of the ghosts, that strife of terms
 For utmost lack of color, form, and breath,
 That tasteless squabbling called Philosophy:
 As if a blue-winged butterfly afloat
 For just three days above the Italian fields,
 Instead of sipping at the heart of flowers,
 Poising in sunshine, fluttering towards its bride,
 Should fast and speculate, considering
 What were if it were not? or what now is
 Instead of that which seems to be itself?
 Its deepest wisdom surely were to be
 A sipping, marrying, blue-winged butterfly;
 Since utmost speculation on itself
 Were but a three days' living of worse sort —

A bruising struggle all within the bounds
Of butterfly existence."

"I protest,"

Burst in Laertes, "against arguments
That start with calling me a butterfly,
A bubble, spark, or other metaphor
Which carries your conclusions as a phrase
In quibbling law will carry property.
Put a thin sucker for my human lips
Fed at a mother's breast, who now needs food
That I will earn for her; put bubbles blown
From frothy thinking, for the joy, the love,
The wants, the pity, and the fellowship
(The ocean deeps I might say, were I bent
On bandying metaphors) that make a man —
Why, rhetoric brings within your easy reach
Conclusions worthy of — a butterfly.
The universe, I hold, is no charade,
No acted pun unriddled by a word,
Nor pain a decimal diminishing
With *hocus-pocus* of a dot or nought.
For those who know it, pain is solely pain:
Not any letters of the alphabet
Wrought syllogistically pattern-wise,
Nor any cluster of fine images,
Nor any missing of their figured dance
By blundering molecules. Analysis
May show you the right physic for the ill,
Teaching the molecules to find their dance,
But spare me your analogies, that hold
Such insight as the figure of a crow
And bar of music put to signify
A crowbar."

Said the Priest, "There I agree —

Would add that sacramental grace is grace
Which to be known must first be felt, with all
The strengthening influxes that come by prayer.
I note this passingly — would not delay
The conversation's tenor, save to hint
That taking stand with Rosencranz one sees
Final equivalence of all we name
Our Good and Ill — their difference meanwhile
Being inborn prejudice that plumps you down
An Ego, brings a weight into your scale

Forcing a standard. That resistless weight
 Obstinate, irremovable by thought,
 Persisting through disproof, an ache, a need
 That spaceless stays where sharp analysis
 Has shown a plenum filled without it — what
 If this, to use your phrase, were just that Being
 Not looking solely, grasping from the dark,
 Weighing the difference you call Ego? This
 Gives you persistence, regulates the flux
 With strict relation rooted in the All.
 Who is he of your late philosophers
 Takes the true name of Being to be Will?
 I — nay, the Church objects nought, is content:
 Reason has reached its utmost negative,
 Physic and metaphysic meet in the inane
 And backward shrink to intense prejudice,
 Making their absolute and homogeneous
 A loaded relative, a choice to be
 Whatever is — supposed: a What is not.
 The Church demands no more, has standing room
 And basis for her doctrine: this (no more) —
 That the strong bias which we name the Soul,
 Though fed and clad by dissoluble waves,
 Has antecedent quality, and rules
 By veto or consent the strife of thought,
 Making arbitrament that we call faith.”
 Here was brief silence, till young Hamlet spoke.
 “I crave direction, Father, how to know
 The sign of that imperative whose right
 To sway my act in face of thronging doubts
 Were an oracular gem in price beyond
 Urim and Thummim lost to Israel.
 That bias of the soul, that conquering die
 Loaded with golden emphasis of Will —
 How find it where resolve, once made, becomes
 The rash exclusion of an opposite
 Which draws the stronger as I turn aloof.”

“I think I hear a bias in your words,”
 The Priest said mildly, — “that strong natural bent
 Which we call hunger. What more positive
 Than appetite? — of spirit or of flesh,
 I care not — ‘sense of need’ were truer phrase.
 You hunger for authoritative right,

And yet discern no difference of tones,
 No weight of rod that marks imperial rule ?
 I aertes granting, I will put your case
 In analogic form : the doctors hold
 Hunger which gives no relish — save caprice
 That tasting venison fancies mellow pears —
 A symptom of disorder, and prescribe
 Strict discipline. Were I physician here
 I would prescribe that exercise of soul
 Which lies in full obedience : you ask,
 Obedience to what ? The answer lies
 Within the word itself ; for how obey
 What has no rule, asserts no absolute claim ?
 Take inclination, taste — why, that is you,
 No rule above you. Science, reasoning
 On nature's order — they exist and move
 Solely by disputation, hold no pledge
 Of final consequence, but push the swing
 Where Epicurus and the Stoic sit
 In endless see-saw. One authority,
 And only one, says simply this, Obey :
 Place yourself in that current (test it so !)
 Of spiritual order where at least
 Lies promise of a high communion,
 A Head informing members, Life that breathes
 With gift of forces over and above
 The *plus* of arithmetic interchange.
 'The Church too has a body,' you object,
 'Can be dissected, put beneath the lens
 And shown the merest continuity
 Of all existence else beneath the sun.'
 I grant you ; but the lens will not disprove
 A presence which eludes it. Take your wit,
 Your highest passion, widest-reaching thought :
 Show their conditions if you will or can,
 But though you saw the final atom-dance
 Making each molecule that stands for sign
 Of love being present, where is still your love ?
 How measure that, how certify its weight ?
 And so I say, the body of the Church
 Carries a Presence, promises and gifts
 Never disproved — whose argument is found
 In lasting failure of the search elsewhere
 For what it holds to satisfy man's need.

But I grow lengthy : my excuse must be
 Your question, Hamlet, which has probed right through
 To the pith of our belief. And I have robbed
 Myself of pleasure as a listener.
 'T is noon, I see ; and my appointment stands
 For half-past twelve with Voltimand. Good-bye."

Brief parting, brief regret — sincere, but quenched
 In fumes of best Havannah, which consoles
 For lack of other certitude. Then said,
 Mildly sarcastic, quiet Guildenstern :
 "I marvel how the Father gave new charm
 To weak conclusions : I was half convinced
 The poorest reasoner made the finest man,
 And held his logic lovelier for its limp."

"I fain would hear," said Hamlet, "how you find
 A stronger footing than the Father gave.
 How base your self-resistance save on faith
 In some invisible Order, higher Right
 Than changing impulse. What does Reason bid ?
 To take a fullest rationality
 What offers best solution : so the Church.
 Science, detecting hydrogen aflame
 Outside our firmament, leaves mystery
 Whole and untouched beyond ; nay, in our blood
 And in the potent atoms of each germ
 The Secret lives — envelops, penetrates
 Whatever sense perceives or thought divines.
 Science, whose soul is explanation, halts
 With hostile front at mystery. The Church
 Takes mystery as her empire, brings its wealth
 Of possibility to fill the void
 'Twixt contradictions — warrants so a faith
 Defying sense and all its ruthless train
 Of arrogant 'Therefore.' Science with her lens
 Dissolves the Forms that made the other half
 Of all our love, which thenceforth widowed lives
 To gaze with maniac stare at what is not.
 The Church explains not, governs — feeds resolve
 By vision fraught with heart-experience
 And human yearning."

"Ay," said Guildenstern,
 With friendly nod, "the Father, I can see,
 Has caught you up in his air-chariot.
 His thought takes rainbow-bridges, out of reach
 By solid obstacles, evaporates
 The coarse and common into subtilties,
 Insists that what is real in the Church
 Is something out of evidence, and begs
 (Just in parenthesis) you'll never mind
 What stares you in the face and bruises you.
 Why, by his method I could justify
 Each superstition and each tyranny
 That ever rode upon the back of man,
 Pretending fitness for his sole defence
 Against life's evil. How can aught subsist
 That holds no theory of gain or good?
 Despots with terror in their red right hand
 Must argue good to helpers and themselves,
 Must let submission hold a core of gain
 To make their slaves choose life. Their theory,
 Abstracting inconvenience of racks,
 Whip-lashes, dragonnades and all things coarse
 Inherent in the fact or concrete mass,
 Presents the pure idea — utmost good
 Secured by Order only to be found
 In strict subordination, hierarchy
 Of forces where, by nature's law, the strong
 Has rightful empire, rule of weaker proved
 Mere dissolution. What can you object?
 The Inquisition — if you turn away
 From narrow notice how the scent of gold
 Has guided sense of damning heresy —
 The Inquisition is sublime, is love
 Hindering the spread of poison in men's souls:
 The flames are nothing: only smaller pain
 To hinder greater, or the pain of one
 To save the many, such as throbs at heart
 Of every system born into the world.
 So of the Church as high communion
 Of Head with members, fount of spirit force
 Beyond the calculus, and carrying proof
 In her sole power to satisfy man's need:
 That seems ideal truth as clear as lines
 That, necessary though invisible, trace

The balance of the planets and the sun —
 Until I find a hitch in that last claim.
 'To satisfy man's need.' Sir, that depends:
 We settle first the measure of man's need
 Before we grant capacity to fill.
 John, James, or Thomas, you may satisfy:
 But since you choose ideals I demand
 Your Church shall satisfy ideal man,
 His utmost reason and his utmost love.
 And say these rest a-hungered — find no scheme
 Content them both, but hold the world accursed,
 A Calvary where Reason mocks at Love,
 And Love forsaken sends out orphan cries
 Hopeless of answer; still the soul remains
 Larger, diviner than your half-way Church,
 Which racks your reason into false consent,
 And soothes your Love with sops of selfishness."

"There I am with you," cried Laertes. "What
 To me are any dictates, though they came
 With thunders from the Mount, if still within
 I see a higher Right, a higher Good
 Compelling love and worship? Though the earth
 Held force electric to discern and kill
 Each thinking rebel — what is martyrdom
 But death-defying utterance of belief,
 Which being mine remains my truth supreme
 Though solitary as the throb of pain
 Lying outside the pulses of the world?
 Obedience is good: ay, but to what?
 And for what ends? For say that I rebel
 Against your rule as devilish, or as rule
 Of thunder-guiding powers that deny
 Man's highest benefit: rebellion then
 Were strict obedience to another rule
 Which bids me flout your thunder."

"Lo you now!"

Said Osric, delicately, "how you come,
 Laertes mine, with all your warring zeal
 As Python-slayer of the present age —
 Cleansing all social swamps by darting rays
 Of dubious doctrine, hot with energy
 Of private judgment and disgust for doubt —
 To state my thesis, which you most abhor

When sung in Daphnis-notes beneath the pines
 To gentle rush of waters. Your belief —
 In essence what is it but simply Taste?
 I urge with you exemption from all claims
 That come from other than my proper will,
 An Ultimate within to balance yours,
 A solid meeting you, excluding you,
 Till you show fuller force by entering
 My spiritual space and crushing Me
 To a subordinate complement of You:
 Such ultimate must stand alike for all.
 Preach your crusade, then: all will join who like
 The hurly-burly of aggressive creeds;
 Still your unpleasant Ought, your itch to choose
 What grates upon the sense, is simply Taste,
 Differs, I think, from mine (permit the word,
 Discussion forces it) in being bad."

The tone was too polite to breed offence,
 Showing a tolerance of what was "bad"
 Becoming courtiers. Louder Rosencranz
 Took up the ball with rougher movement, wout
 To show contempt for doting reasoners
 Who hugged some reasons with a preference,
 As warm Laertes did: he gave five puffs
 Intolerantly sceptical, then said,
 "Your human good, which you would make supreme.
 How do you know it? Has it shown its face
 In adamant type, with features clear,
 As this republic, or that monarchy?
 As federal grouping, or municipal?
 Equality, or finely shaded lines
 Of social difference? ecstatic whirl
 And draught intense of passionate joy and pain,
 Or sober self-control that starves its youth
 And lives to wonder what the world calls joy?
 Is it in sympathy that shares men's pangs
 Or in cool brains that can explain them well?
 Is it in labor or in laziness?
 In training for the tug of rivalry
 To be admired, or in the admiring soul?
 In risk or certitude? In battling rage
 And hardy challenges of Protean luck,
 Or in a sleek and rural apathy

Full fed with sameness? Pray define your Good
 Beyond rejection by majority;
 Next, how it may subsist without the Ill
 Which seems its only outline. Show a world
 Of pleasure not resisted; or a world
 Of pressure equalized, yet various
 In action formative; for that will serve
 As illustration of your human good—
 Which at its perfecting (your goal of hope)
 Will not be straight extinct, or fall to sleep
 In the deep bosom of the Unchangeable.
 What will you work for, then, and call it good
 With full and certain vision—good for aught
 Save partial ends which happen to be yours?
 How will you get your stringency to bind
 Thought or desire in demonstrated tracks
 Which are but waves within a balanced whole?
 Is 'relative' the magic word that turns
 Your flux mercurial of good to gold?
 Why, that analysis at which you rage
 As anti-social force that sweeps you down
 The world in one cascade of molecules,
 Is brother 'relative'—and grins at you
 Like any convict whom you thought to send
 Outside society, till this enlarged
 And meant New England and Australia too.
 The Absolute is your shadow, and the space
 Which you say might be real were you milled
 To curves pellicular, the thinnest thin,
 Equation of no thickness, is still you."

"Abstracting all that makes him clubbable,"
 Horatio interposed. But Roseneranz,
 Deaf as the angry turkey-cock whose ears
 Are plugged by swollen tissues when he scolds
 At men's pretensions: "Pooh, your 'Relative'
 Shuts you in, hopeless, with your progeny
 As in a Hunger-tower; your social good,
 Like other deities by turn supreme,
 Is transient reflex of a prejudice,
 Anthology of causes and effects
 To suit the mood of fanatics who lead
 The mood of tribe or nations. I admit
 If you could show a sword, nay, chance of sword

Hanging conspicuous to their inward eyes
With edge so constant threatening as to sway
All greed and lust by terror ; and a law
Clear-writ and proven as the law supreme
Which that dread sword enforces — then your Right,
Duty, or social Good, were it once brought
To common measure with the potent law,
Would dip the scale, would put unchanging marks
Of wisdom or of folly on each deed,
And warrant exhortation. Until then,
Where is your standard or criterion ?
'What always, everywhere, by all men' — why,
That were but Custom, and your system needs
Ideals never yet incorporate,
The imminent doom of Custom. Can you find
Appeal beyond the sentience in each man ?
Frighten the blind with scarecrows ? raise an awe
Of things unseen where appetite commands
Chambers of imagery in the soul
At all its avenues ? — You chant your hymns
To Evolution, on your altar lay
A sacred egg called Progress : have you proved
A Best unique where all is relative,
And where each change is loss as well as gain ?
The age of healthy Saurians, well supplied
With heat and prey, will balance well enough
A human age where maladies are strong
And pleasures feeble ; wealth a monster gorged
Mid hungry populations ; intellect
Aproned in laboratories, bent on proof
That *this* is *that* and both are good for nought
Save feeding error through a weary life ;
While Art and Poesy struggle like poor ghosts
To hinder cock-crow and the dreadful light,
Lurking in darkness and the charnel-house,
Or like two stalwart greybeards, imbecile
With limbs still active, playing at belief
That hunt the slipper, foot-ball, hide-and-seek,
Are sweetly merry, donning pinafores
And lisping emulously in their speech.
O human race ! Is this then all thy gain ? —
Working at disproof, playing at belief,
Debate or causes, distaste of effects,
Power to transmute all elements, and lack

Of any power to sway the fatal skill
 And make thy lot aught else than rigid doom ?
 The Saurians were better. — Guildenstern,
 Pass me the taper. Still the human curse
 Has mitigation in the best cigars."

Then swift Laertes, not without a glare
 Of leonine wrath, "I thank thee for that word :
 That one confession, were I Socrates,
 Should force you onward till you ran your head
 At your own image — flatly gave the lie
 To all your blasphemy of that human good
 Which bred and nourished you to sit at ease
 And learnedly deny it. Say the world
 Groans ever with the pangs of doubtful births :
 Say, life's a poor donation at the best —
 Wisdom a yearning after nothingness —
 Nature's great vision and the thrill supreme
 Of thought-fed passion but a weary play —
 I argue not against you. Who can prove
 Wit to be witty when with deeper ground
 Dulness intuitive declares wit dull ?
 If life is worthless to you — why, it is.
 You only know how little love you feel
 To give you fellowship, how little force
 Responsive to the quality of things.
 Then end your life, throw off the unsought yoke.
 If not — if you remain to taste cigars,
 Choose racy diction, perorate at large
 With tacit scorn of meaner men who win
 No wreath or tripos — then admit at least
 A possible Better in the seeds of earth ;
 Acknowledge debt to that laborious life
 Which, sifting evermore the mingled seeds,
 Testing the Possible with patient skill,
 And daring ill in presence of a good
 For futures to inherit, made your lot
 One you would choose rather than end it, nay,
 Rather than, say, some twenty million lots
 Of fellow-Britons toiling all to make
 That nation, that community, whereon
 You feed and thrive and talk philosophy.
 I am no optimist whose faith must hang
 On hard pretences that pain is beautiful

And agony explained for men at ease
By virtue's exercise in pitying it.
But this I hold: that he who takes one gift
Made for him by the hopeful work of man,
Who tastes sweet bread, walks where he will unarmed,
His shield and warrant the invisible law,
Who owns a hearth and household charities,
Who clothes his body and his sentient soul
With skill and thoughts of men, and yet denies
A human good worth toiling for, is cursed
With worse negation than the poet feigned
In Mephistopheles. The Devil spins
His wire-drawn argument against all good
With sense of brimstone as his private lot,
And never drew a solace from the Earth."

Laertes fuming paused, and Guildenstern
Took up with cooler skill the fusillade:
"I meet your deadliest challenge, Rosencrantz: —
Where get, you say, a binding law, a rule
Enforced by sanction, an Ideal throned
With thunder in its hand? I answer, there
Whence every faith and rule has drawn its force
Since human consciousness awaking owned
An Outward, whose unconquerable sway
Resisted first and then subdued desire
By pressure of the dire Impossible
Urging to possible ends the active soul
And shaping so its terror and its love.
Why, you have said it — threats and promises
Depend on each man's sentience for their force:
All sacred rules, imagined or revealed,
Can have no form or potency apart
From the percipient and emotive mind.
God, duty, love, submission, fellowship,
Must first be framed in man, as music is,
Before they live outside him as a law.
And still they grow and shape themselves anew,
With fuller concentration in their life
Of inward and of outward energies
Blending to make the last result called Man,
Which means, not this or that philosopher
Looking through beauty into blankness, not
The swindler who has sent his fruitful lie

By the last telegram : it means the tide
Of needs reciprocal, toil, trust, and love —
The surging multitude of human claims
Which make "a presence not to be put by"
Above the horizon of the general soul
Is inward Reason shrunk to subtleties,
And inward wisdom pining passion-starved? —
The outward Reason has the world in store,
Regenerates passion with the stress of want,
Regenerates knowledge with discovery,
Shows aly rapacious Self a blunderer,
Widens dependence, knits the social whole
In sensible relation more defined.
Do Boards and dirty-handed millionaires
Govern the planetary system? — sway
The pressure of the Universe? — decide
That man henceforth shall retrogress to ape,
Emptied of every sympathetic thrill
The All has wrought in him? dam up henceforth
The flood of human claims as private force
To turn their wheels and make a private hell
For fish-pond to their mercantile domain?
What are they but a parasitic growth
On the vast real and ideal world
Of man and nature blent in one divine?
Why, take your closing dirge — say evil grows
And good is dwindling; science mere decay,
Mere dissolutions of ideal wholes
Which through the ages past alone have made
The earth and firmament of human faith;
Say, the small arc of Being we call man
Is near its mergence, what seems growing life
Nought but a hurrying change towards lower types,
The ready rankness of degeneracy.
Well, they who mourn for the world's dying good
May take their common sorrows for a rock,
On it erect religion and a church,
A worship, rites, and passionate piety —
The worship of the Best though crucified
And God-forsaken in its dying pangs;
The sacramental rites of fellowship
In common woe; visions that purify
Through admiration and despairing love
Which keep their spiritual life intact

Beneath the murderous clutches of disproof
And feed a martyr-strength."

"Religion high!"

(Rosencranz here) "but with communicants
Few as the cedars upon Lebanon —
A child might count them. What the world demands
Is faith coercive of the multitude."

"Tush, Guildenstern, you granted him too much."
Burst in Laertes; "I will never grant
One inch of law to feeble blasphemies
Which hold no higher ratio to life —
Full vigorous human life that peopled earth
And wrought and fought and loved and bravely died —
Than the sick morning glooms of debauchees.
Old nations breed old children, wizened babes
Whose youth is languid and incredulous,
Weary of life without the will to die;
Their passions visionary appetites
Of bloodless spectres wailing that the world
For lack of substance slips from out their grasp;
Their thoughts the withered husks of all things dead,
Holding no force of germs instinct with life,
Which never hesitates but moves and grows.
Yet hear them boast in screams their godlike ill,
Excess of knowing! Fie on you, Rosencranz!
You lend your brains and fine-dividing tongue
For bass-notes to this shrivelled crudity,
This immature decrepitude that strains
To fill our ears and claim the prize of strength
For mere unmanliness. Out on them all! —
Wits, puling minstrels, and philosophers,
Who living softly prate of suicide,
And suck the commonwealth to feed their ease
While they vent epigrams and threnodies,
Mocking or wailing all the eager work
Which makes that public store whereon they feed.
Is wisdom flattened sense and mere distaste?
Why, any superstition warm with love,
Inspired with purpose, wild with energy
That streams resistless through its ready frame,
Has more of human truth within its life
Than souls that look through color into nought, —

Whose brain, too unimpassioned for delight,
 Has feeble ticklings of a vanity
 Which finds the universe beneath its mark,
 And scorning the blue heavens as merely blue,
 Can only say, 'What then?' — pre-eminent
 In wondrous want of likeness to their kind,
 Founding that worship of sterility
 Whose one supreme is vacillating Will
 Which makes the Light, then says, 'T were better no

Here rash Laertes brought his Händel-strain
 As of some angry Polypheme, to pause;
 And Osric, shocked at ardors out of taste,
 Relieved the audience with a tenor voice
 And delicate delivery.

"For me,
 I range myself in line with Rosencranz
 Against all schemes, religious or profane,
 That flaunt a Good as pretext for a lash
 To flog us all who have the better taste,
 Into conformity, requiring me
 At peril of the thong and sharp disgrace
 To care how mere Philistines pass their lives;
 Whether the English pauper-total grows
 From one to two before the noughts; how far
 Teuton will outbreed Roman; if the class
 Of proletaires will make a federal band
 To bind all Europe and America,
 Throw, in their wrestling, every government,
 Snatch the world's purse and keep the guillotine:
 Or else (admitting these are casualties)
 Driving my soul with scientific hail
 That shuts the landscape out with particles;
 Insisting that the Palingenesis
 Means telegraphs and measure of the rate
 At which the stars move — nobody knows where.
 So far, my Rosencranz, we are at one.
 But not when you blaspheme the life of Art,
 The sweet perennial youth of Poesy,
 Which asks no logic but its sensuous growth,
 No right but loveliness; which fearless strolls
 Betwixt the burning mountain and the sea,
 Reckless of earthquake and the lava stream,
 Filling its hour with beauty. It knows nought

Of bitter strife, denial, grim resolve,
 Sour resignation, busy emphasis
 Of fresh illusions named the new-born True,
 Old Error's latest child ; but as a lake
 Images all things, yet within its depths
 Dreams them all lovelier — thrills with sound
 And makes a harp of plenteous liquid chords —
 So Art or Poesy : we its votaries
 Are the Olympians, fortunately born
 From the elemental mixture ; 't is our lot
 To pass more swiftly than the Delian God,
 But still the earth breaks into flowers for us,
 And mortal sorrows when they reach our ears
 Are dying falls to melody divine.
 Hatred, war, vice, crime, sin, those human storms,
 Cyclones, floods, what you will — outbursts of force —
 Feed art with contrast, give the grander touch
 To the master's pencil and the poet's song,
 Serve as Vesuvian fires or navies tossed
 On yawning waters, which when viewed afar
 Deepen the calm sublime of those choice souls
 Who keep the heights of poesy and turn
 A fleckless mirror to the various world,
 Giving its many-named and fitful flux
 An imaged, harmless, spiritual life.
 With pure selection, native to art's frame,
 Of beauty only, save its minor scale
 Of ill and pain to give the ideal joy
 A keener edge. This is a mongrel globe ;
 All finer being wrought from its coarse earth
 Is but accepted privilege : what else
 Your boasted virtue, which proclaims itself
 A good above the average consciousness ?
 Nature exists by partiality
 (Each planet's poise must carry two extremes
 With verging breadths of minor wretchedness) :
 We are her favorites and accept our wings.
 For your accusal, Rosencranz, that art
 Shares in the dread and weakness of the time,
 I hold it null ; since art or poesy pure,
 Being blameless by all standards save her own,
 Takes no account of modern or antique
 In morals, science, or philosophy :
 No dull elenchus makes a yoke for her,

Whose law and measure are the sweet consent
Of sensibilities that move apart

- From rise or fall of systems, states or creeds —
Apart from what Philistines call man's weal."

"Ay, we all know those votaries of the Muse
Ravished with singing till they quite forgot
Their manhood, sang, and gaped, and took no food,
Then died of emptiness, and for reward
Lived on as grasshoppers" — Laertes thus :
But then he checked himself as one who feels
His muscles dangerous, and Guildenstern
Filled up the pause with calmer confidence.

"You use your wings, my Osric, poise yourself
Safely outside all reach of argument,
Then dogmatize at will (a method known
To ancient women and philosophers,
Nay, to Philistines whom you most abhor);
Else, could an arrow reach you, I should ask
Whence came taste, beauty, sensibilities
Refined to preference infallible?
Doubtless, ye're gods — these odors ye inhale,
A sacrificial scent. But how, I pray,
Are odors made, if not by gradual change
Of sense or substance? Is your beautiful
A seedless, rootless flower, or has it grown
With human growth, which means the rising sum
Of human struggle, order, knowledge? — sense
Trained to a fuller record, more exact —
To truer guidance of each passionate force?
Get me your roseate flesh without the blood;
Get fine aromas without structure wrought
From simpler being into manifold:
Then and then only flaunt your Beautiful
As what can live apart from thought, creeds, states,
Which means life's structure. Osric, I beseech —
The infallible should be more catholic —
Join in a war-dance with the cannibals,
Hear Chinese music, love a face tattooed,
Give adoration to a pointed skull,
And think the Hindu Siva looks divine:
'T is art, 't is poesy. Say you object:
How came you by that lofty dissidence,

If not through changes in the social man
 Widening his consciousness from Here and Now
 To larger wholes beyond the reach of sense;
 Controlling to a fuller harmony
 The thrill of passion and the rule of fact;
 And paling false ideals in the light
 Of full-rayed sensibilities which blend
 Truth and desire? Taste, beauty, what are they
 But the soul's choice towards perfect bias wrought
 By finer balance of a fuller growth —
 Sense brought to subtlest metamorphosis
 Through love, thought, joy — the general human store
 Which grows from all life's functions? As the plant
 Holds its corolla, purple, delicate,
 Solely as outflush of that energy
 Which moves transformingly in root and branch."

Guildenstern paused, and Hamlet quivering
 Since Orsic spoke, in transit imminent
 From catholic striving into laxity,
 Ventured his word. "Seems to me, Guildenstern,
 Your argument, though shattering Orsic's point
 That sensibilities can move apart
 From social order, yet has not annulled
 His thesis that the life of poesy
 (Admitting it must grow from out the whole)
 Has separate functions, a transfigured realm
 Freed from the rigors of the practical,
 Where what is hidden from the grosser world —
 Stormed down by roar of engines and the shouts
 Of eager concourse — rises beauteous
 As voice of water-drops in sapphire caves;
 A realm where finest spirits have free sway
 In exquisite selection, uncontrolled
 By hard material necessity
 Of cause and consequence. For you will grant
 The Ideal has discoveries which ask
 No test, no faith, save that we joy in them:
 A new-found continent with spreading lands
 Where pleasure charters all, where virtue, rank,
 Use, right, and truth have but one name, Delight.
 Thus Art's creations, when etherealized
 To least admixture of the grosser fact
 Delight may stamp as highest."

"Possible!"

Said Guildenstern, with touch of weariness,
 "But then we might dispute of what is gross,
 What high, what low."

"Nay," said Laertes, "ask
 The mightiest makers who have reigned, still reign
 Within the ideal realm. See if their thought
 Be drained of practice and the thick warm blood
 Of hearts that beat in action various
 Through the wide drama of the struggling world,
 Good-bye, Horatio."

Each now said "Good-bye."
 Such breakfast, such beginning of the day
 Is more than half the whole. The sun was hot
 On southward branches of the meadow elms,
 The shadows slowly farther crept and veered
 Like changing memories, and Hamlet strolled
 Alone and dubious on the empurpled path
 Between the waving grasses of new June
 Close by the stream where well-compacted boats
 Were moored or moving with a lazy creak
 To the soft dip of oars. All sounds were light
 As tiny silver bells upon the robes
 Of hovering silence. Birds made twitterings
 That seemed but Silence self o'erfull of love.
 'T was invitation all to sweet repose;
 And Hamlet, drowsy with the mingled draughts
 Of cider and conflicting sentiments,
 Chose a green couch and watched with half-closed eyes
 The meadow-road, the stream and dreamy lights,
 Until they merged themselves in sequence strange
 With undulating ether, time, the soul,
 The will supreme, the individual claim,
 The social Ought, the lyrist's liberty,
 Democritus, Pythagoras, in talk
 With Anselm, Darwin, Comte, and Schopenhauer,
 The poets rising slow from out their tombs
 Summoned as arbiters — that border-world
 Of dozing, ere the sense is fully locked.

And then he dreamed a dream so luminous

He woke (he says) convinced; but what it taught
Withholds as yet. Perhaps those graver shades
Admonished him that visions told in haste
Part with their virtues to the squandering lips
And leave the soul in wider emptiness.

April, 1874

TWO LOVERS

Two lovers by a moss-grown spring :
They leaned soft cheeks together there,
Mingled the dark and sunny hair,
And heard the wooing thrushes sing.
O budding time !
O love's blest prime !

Two wedded from the portal stept :
The bells made happy carollings,
The air was soft as fanning wings,
White petals on the pathway slept.
O pure-eyed bride !
O tender pride !

Two faces o'er a cradle bent :
Two hands above the head were locked ;
These pressed each other while they rocked,
Those watched a life that love had sent.
O solemn hour !
O hidden power !

Two parents by the evening fire :
The red light fell about their knees
On heads that rose by slow degrees
Like buds upon the lily spire.
O patient life !
O tender strife !

The two still sat together there,
The red light shone about their knees ;
But all the heads by slow degrees
Had gone and left that lonely pair.
O voyage fast !
O vanished past !

The red light shone upon the floor
And made the space between them wide ;
They drew their chairs up side by side,
Their pale cheeks joined, and said, "*Once more !*"
O memories !
O past that is !

1866.

SELF AND LIFE.

SELF.

CHANGEFUL comrade, Life of mine,
Before we two must part,
I will tell thee, thou shalt say,
What thou hast been and art.
Ere I lose my hold of thee
Justify thyself to me.

LIFE.

I was thy warmth upon thy mother's knee
When light and love within her eyes were one ;
We laughed together by the laurel-tree,
Culling warm daisies 'neath the sloping sun ;
We heard the chickens' lazy croon,
Where the trellised woodbines grew,
And all the summer afternoon
Mystic gladness o'er thee threw.
Was it person ? Was it thing ?
Was it touch or whispering ?
It was bliss and it was I :
Bliss was what thou knew'st me by.

SELF.

Soon I knew thee more by Fear
And sense of what was not,
Haunting all I held most dear
I had a double lot :
Ardor, cheated with alloy,
Wept the more for dreams of joy.

LIFE.

Remember how thy ardor's magic sense
Made poor things rich to thee and small things great ;
How hearth and garden, field and bushy fence,
Were thy own eager love incorporate ;
And how the solemn, splendid Past
O'er thy early widened earth
Made grandeur, as on sunset cast
Dark elms near take mighty girth.
Hands and feet were tiny still
When we knew the historic thrill,
Breathed deep breath in heroes dead,
Tasted the immortals' bread.

SELF.

Seeing what I might have been
Reproved the thing I was,
Smoke on heaven's clearest sheen,
The speck within the rose.
By revered ones' frailties stung
Reverence was with anguish wrung.

LIFE.

But all thy anguish and thy discontent
Was growth of mine, the elemental strife
Towards feeling manifold with vision blent
To wider thought : I was no vulgar life
That, like the water-mirrored ape,
Not discerns the thing it sees,
Nor knows its own in others' shape,
Railing, scorning, at its ease.
Half man's truth must hidden lie
If unlit by Sorrow's eye.
I by Sorrow wrought in thee
Willing pain of ministry.

SELF.

Slowly was the lesson taught
Through passion, error, care :

Insight was with loathing fraught
And effort with despair.
Written on the wall I saw
"Bow !" I knew, not loved, the law.

LIFE.

But then I brought a love that wrote within
The law of gratitude, and made thy heart
Beat to the heavenly tune of seraphin
Whose only joy in having is, to impart:
Till thou, poor Self — despite thy ire,
Wrestling 'gainst my mingled share,
Thy faults, hard falls, and vain desire
Still to be what others were —
Filled, o'erflowed with tenderness
Seeming more as thou wert less,
Knew me through that anguish past
As a fellowship more vast.

SELF.

Yea, I embrace thee, changeful Life !
Far-sent, unchosen mate !
Self and thou, no more at strife,
Shall wed in hallowed state.
Willing spousals now shall prove
Life is justified by love.

"SWEET EVENINGS COME AND GO, LOVE."

"La noche buena se viene,
La noche buena se va,
Y nosotros nos iremos
Y no volveremos mas."

— Old Villancico.

SWEET evenings come and go, love,
They came and went of yore :
This evening of our life, love,
Shall go and come no more.

When we have passed away, love,
All things will keep their name ;
But yet no life on earth, love,
With ours will be the same.

The daisies will be there, love,
The stars in heaven will shine :
I shall not feel thy wish, love,
Nor thou my hand in thine.

A better time will come, love,
And better souls be born :
I would not be the best, love,
To leave thee now forlorn.

THE DEATH OF MOSES.

MOSES, who spake with God as with his friend,
And ruled his people with the twofold power
Of wisdom that can dare and still be meek,
Was writing his last word, the sacred name
Unutterable of that Eternal Will
Which was and is and evermore shall be.
Yet was his task not finished, for the flock
Needed its shepherd and the life-taught sage
Leaves no successor; but to chosen men,
The rescuers and guides of Israel,
A death was given called the Death of Grace,
Which freed them from the burden of the flesh
But left them rulers of the multitude
And loved companions of the lonely. This
Was God's last gift to Moses, this the hour
When soul must part from self and be but soul.

God spake to Gabriel, the messenger
Of mildest death that draws the parting life
Gently, as when a little rosy child
Lifts up its lips from off the bowl of milk
And so draws forth a curl that dipped its gold
In the soft white — thus Gabriel draws the soul.
“Go bring the soul of Moses unto me!”
And the awe-stricken angel answered, “Lord,
How shall I dare to take his life who lives
Sole of his kind, not to be likened once
In all the generations of the earth?”

Then God called Michaël, him of pensive brow,
Snow-vest and flaming sword, who knows and acts:
“Go bring the spirit of Moses unto me!”

But Michaël with such grief as angels feel,
 Loving the mortals whom they succor, pled:
 "Almighty, spare me; it was I who taught
 Thy servant Moses; he is part of me
 As I of thy deep secrets, knowing them."

Then God called Zamaël, the terrible.
 The angel of fierce death, of agony
 That comes in battle and in pestilence
 Remorseless, sudden or with lingering throes.
 And Zamaël, his raiment and broad wings
 Blood-tinctured, the dark lustre of his eyes
 Shrouding the red, fell like the gathering night
 Before the prophet. But that radiance
 Won from the heavenly presence in the mount
 Gleamed on the prophet's brow and dazzling pierced
 Its conscious opposite: the angel turned
 His murky gaze aloof and inly said:
 "An angel this, deathless to angel's stroke."

But Moses felt the subtly nearing dark:—
 "Who art thou? and what wilt thou?" Zamaël
 then:
 "I am God's reaper; through the fields of life
 I gather ripened and unripened souls
 Both willing and unwilling. And I come
 Now to reap thee." But Moses cried,
 Firm as a seer who waits the trusted sign:
 "Reap thou the fruitless plant and common herb—
 Not him who from the womb was sanctified
 To teach the law of purity and love."
 And Zamaël baffled from his errand fled.

But Moses, pausing, in the air serene
 Heard now that mystic whisper, far yet near,
 The all-penetrating Voice, that said to him,
 "Moses, the hour is come and thou must die."
 "Lord, I obey; but thou rememberest
 How thou, Ineffable, didst take me once
 Within thy orb of light untouched by death."
 Then the voice answered, "Be no more afraid:
 With me shall be thy death and burial."
 So Moses waited, ready now to die.

And the Lord came, invisible as a thought,
Three angels gleaming on his secret track,
Prince Michael, Zagaël, Gabriel, charged to guard
The soul-forsaken body as it fell
And bear it to the hidden sepulchre
Denied for ever to the search of man.
And the Voice said to Moses: "Close thine eyes."
He closed them. "Lay thine hand upon thine heart,
And draw thy feet together." He obeyed.
And the Lord said, "O spirit! child of mine!
A hundred years and twenty thou hast dwelt
Within this tabernacle wrought of clay.
This is the end: come forth and flee to heaven."

But the grieved soul with plaintive pleading cried,
"I love this body with a clinging love:
The courage fails me, Lord, to part from it."

"O child, come forth! for thou shalt dwell with me
About the immortal throne where seraphs joy
In growing vision and in growing love."

Yet hesitating, fluttering, like the bird
With young wing weak and dubious, the soul
Stayed. But behold! upon the death-dewed lips
A kiss descended, pure, unspeakable —
The bodiless Love without embracing Love
That lingered in the body, drew it forth
With heavenly strength and carried it to heaven.

But now beneath the sky the watchers all,
Angels that keep the homes of Israel
Or on high purpose wander o'er the world
Leading the Gentiles, felt a dark eclipse:
The greatest ruler among men was gone.
And from the westward sea was heard a wail,
A dirge as from the isles of Javanim,
Crying, "Who is now left upon the earth
Like him to teach the right and smite the wrong?"
And from the East, far o'er the Syrian waste,
Came slower, sadder, the answering dirge:
"No prophet like him lives or shall arise
In Israel or the world for evermore."

But Israel waited, looking toward the mount,
Till with the deepening eve the elders came
Saying, "His burial is hid with God.
We stood far off and saw the angels lift
His corpse aloft until they seemed a star
That burnt itself away within the sky."

The people answered with mute orphaned gaze
Looking for what had vanished evermore.
Then through the gloom without them and within
The spirit's shaping light, mysterious speech,
Invisible Will wrought clear in sculptured sound,
The thought-begotten daughter of the voice,
Thrilled on their listening sense: "He has no tomb
He dwells not with you dead, but lives as Law."

ARION.

(HEROD. — I, 24.)

ARION, whose melodic soul
Taught the dithyramb to roll
Like forest fires, and sing
Olympian suffering,

Had carried his diviner lore
From Corinth to the sister shore
Where Greece could largelier be,
Branching o'er Italy.

Then weighted with his glorious name
And bags of gold, aboard he came
'Mid harsh seafaring men
To Corinth bound again.

The sailors eyed the bags and thought:
"The gold is good, the man is nought —
And who shall track the wave
That opens for his grave?"

With brawny arms and cruel eyes
They press around him where he lies
In sleep beside his lyre,
Hearing the Muses quire.

He waked and saw this wolf-faced Death
Breaking the dream that filled his breath
With inspiration strong
Of yet unchanted song.

"Take, take my gold and let me live!"
He prayed, as kings do when they give
Their all with royal will,
Holding born kingship still.

To rob the living they refuse,
One death or other he must choose,
 Either the watery pall
 Or wounds and burial.

“ My solemn robe then let me don,
Give me high space to stand upon,
 That dying I may pour
 A song unsung before.”

It pleased them well to grant this prayer,
To hear for nought how it might fare
 With men who paid their gold
 For what a poet sold.

In flowing stole, his eyes aglow
With inward fire, he neared the prow
 And took his god-like stand,
 The cithara in hand.

The wolfish men all shrank aloof,
And feared this singer might be proof
 Against their murderous power,
 After his lyric hour.

But he, in liberty of song,
Fearless of death or other wrong,
 With full spondaic toll
 Poured forth his mighty soul :

Poured forth the strain his dream had taught,
A nome with lofty passion fraught
 Such as makes battles won
 On fields of Marathon.

The last long vowels trembled then
As awe within those wolfish men :
 They said, with mutual stare,
 Some god was present there.

But lo ! Arion leaped on high
Ready, his descant done, to die ;
 Not asking, “ Is it well ? ”
 Like a pierced eagle fell.

"O MAY I JOIN THE CHOIR INVISIBLE."

*Longum illud tempus, quum non ero, magis me movet, quum hoc
eziguum.* — CICERO, ad Att., xii. 18.

O MAY I join the choir invisible
Of those immortal dead who live again
In minds made better by their presence: live
In pulses stirred to generosity.
In deeds of daring rectitude, in scorn
For miserable aims that end with self,
In thoughts sublime that pierce the night like stars,
And with their mild persistence urge man's search
To vaster issues.

So to live is heaven:
To make undying music in the world,
Breathing as beauteous order that controls
With growing sway the growing life of man.
So we inherit that sweet purity
For which we struggled, failed, and agonized
With widening retrospect that bred despair.
Rebellious flesh that would not be subdued,
A vicious parent shaming still its child
Poor anxious penitence, is quick dissolved;
Its discords, quenched by meeting harmonies,
Die in the large and charitable air.
And all our rarer, better, truer self,
That sobbed religiously in yearning song,
That watched to ease the burden of the world,
Laboriously tracing what must be,
And what may yet be better — saw within
A worthier image for the sanctuary,
And shaped it forth before the multitude

Divinely human, raising worship so
To higher reverence more mixed with love —
That better self shall live till human Time
Shall fold its eyelids, and the human sky
Be gathered like a scroll within the tomb
Unread for ever.

 This is life to come,
Which martyred men have made more glorious
For us who strive to follow. May I reach
That purest heaven, be to other souls
The cup of strength in some great agony,
Enkindle generous ardor, feed pure love,
Beget the smiles that have no cruelty —
Be the sweet presence of a good diffused,
And in diffusion ever more intense.
So shall I join the choir invisible
Whose music is the gladness of the world.

1867.

